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THE SECRET OF THE LORD

BY THE REV.

W. M. CLOW, B.D.
GLASGOW

AUTHOR OF "THE CROSS IN CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE"
"THE DAY OF THE CROSS"

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PREFACE

THIS book is a series of addresses on the sayings and doings of Jesus during the days of a religious retreat held in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi. This withdrawal of Jesus to the quiet of the hills which cluster round the northern end of the valley of the Jordan has been strangely neglected. Its momentousness as an epoch in His life, and the depth and significances of its teaching, have been overlooked. The purpose of these studies is to set the events of this quiet season and its solemn words in relation to the purpose of Christ's life and death, and to expound their teaching for faith and righteousness. The title of the book has been chosen not for the music of its sound, but for the fitness of its meaning. To His chosen disciples, in those days of seclusion, at the summit level of His ministry, Jesus disclosed "The Secret of the Lord."

The exposition of the words and deeds of Jesus has been carried out with a constant endeavour to avoid any narrowing isolation of them. It is a method full of peril to tear some passage out of

a chapter, or to excise some striking and rhythmic phrase from a sentence, and to catch at its suggestions, apart from the trend of the whole message of Jesus. Many of the modern misconceptions of the person and work of Christ, and much of the insufficient teaching of His message, is due to this easy licence, in which interest and charm are sought rather than the solemn and imperative message of the Gospel. For this reason it will be seen that, while the passages in the three Synoptic Gospels have been critically examined, no word or phrase in them has been pressed which has not behind it the sanction and authority of the larger teaching of Christ.

May I express the hope that those who read will also be led to spend some quiet days with Christ, to see His glory, to feel their need of the word of His grace, and, in a renewing dedication of life and service, to confess Him Lord.

GLASGOW.

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I

THE MEN OF THE SECRET

"The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will shew them His covenant."—Ps. xxv. 14.

"Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John."—MARK ix. 2.

THERE is a threefold distinction in religion which is as simple as it is profound. Religion, in its simplest aspect, is a life. It is to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. It is to do the will of God from the heart. It is to visit the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. But religion is more than a life. It is also a faith. It is to see the invisible. It is a trust in the being, and wisdom, and power, and love of God. It is a conviction and assurance of spiritual truth which every man fashions into his creed, whether he sets it down in statement and article, or leaves it unexpressed. But religion is more than a faith. It is an experience, not to be shared with the world, and never to be uttered to alien ears. It is an experience which a man dare not tell, cannot tell, to the outsider. It is solemn, mystic, incommun-

icable. It is a knowledge of God and of His ways, and purposes, and desires, which issues into the peace which passeth all understanding, the hope which maketh not ashamed, the joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is this experience which the Psalmist named the secret of the Lord. Here he sets down its law. It is "with them that fear Him." He adds the seal of the law when he writes, "and He will shew them His covenant."

When the Hebrew poet spoke of the secret of the Lord he meant the knowledge of the God of Israel, the unseen and eternal Jehovah. When he thought of them that fear Him, he remembered the stalwart saints who shall ever be the heroic leaders of the faith. He recalled Abraham coming out of Ur of the Chaldees with a wisdom and a knowledge that no Babylonian star-gazer ever divined. He thought of Jacob rising from his midnight dream at Bethel, saying in penitence and awe, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." He saw Moses at the burning bush, putting off the shoes from his feet, for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. He remembered Samuel coming out of the temple in the morning light, having heard the voice of God, with a message he dared not tell to Eli. Each of these had entered into a solemn experience. Each of them had come forth with a secret. A new and deeper understanding of God's ways, and thoughts, and purposes had been given them. He marks the law of their experience. It

was the law of fear. They had that fear of God which is an awe and reverence, a passion of desire to know, and a willingness to submit and to obey. Therefore God made known the secret to them. To Abraham and not to Lot, to Jacob and not to Esau, to Moses and not to any craven and servile bondman beside the Nile, to Samuel and not to Eli, there was given the secret of the Lord. As their lives rose up in review before him he marked the consummation of the secret. God had shown them His covenant.

For us, the Lord is known by a sweeter, tenderer, more human name than Jehovah. For us the Lord is—Jesus. For us the secret is deeper, more wonderful, more unutterable. It is a knowledge more intimate, more immediate, more personal, than was possible to men for whom God was in the heavens beyond the blue. The secret of the Lord for us is that of one who has come very near to us, and has been found in the likeness of a man. It is the secret of one who has made Himself known to us in the breaking of the bread. What that secret is to each one of us depends on what Jesus is, and has become, to us. He is not the same to the youth beginning his Christian life, in the ardour and chivalry of a first love, as He is to the old man who has known Him through all the varying years, and has grown grey in His service. He is not the same to the men and women who keep only a light touch with Him as He is to those who are entirely

surrendered to His will. But speaking broadly, there are three things which Jesus is to all who know His secret at all. He is the Master. He is the Friend. He is the Lover. The secret of the Lord is therefore, first, the Master's secret; second, the Friend's secret; and third, the Lover's secret. The law in every case is this, the secret is "with them that fear Him." They are the men of the secret.

I. THE MASTER'S SECRET.

Every master has his secret. The craftsman who engages an apprentice undertakes to teach him his trade. He watches the boy with critical eyes. He marks the bungling of his clumsy and untrained hands. He is wise and patient in correction, and instant in counsel. He is alert for any sign of skill, deftness, taste. The day comes when the lad has caught his master's method, understood his craftsmanship, and emulated the swift ease of his work. The workman's cunning is found also in his fingers, and he has learned his master's secret. Every teacher has his secret. He scans his scholars, eager to find a receptive mind to whom he can reveal it. When the responsive glance, or significant word, or the searching question reveals the student's promise, the teacher has an exquisite joy in revealing his secret. The great painters of the Middle Ages took pupils into their studios. To every aspirant they gave honest attention. When one came who

was swift to understand his master's conceptions, eager to imitate his strength of line and purity of colour, humbly and patiently reverent in his zeal, the secret was disclosed. In our own day Edward Burne Jones became a disciple of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He spent still and strenuous hours in copying his master's work, studying their distinction, and aspiring after their spirit. With a trembling heart young Burne Jones took his drawings to Rossetti to receive his judgment upon them. The honest painter looked at them in silence, and with a word of emotion he said, "You have nothing more to learn from me." He had entered into the master's secret. But mark the law. It is not to the carping critic, the scorning and cynical scholar, the contemptuous idler, that the secret is revealed. The secret is "with them that fear."

What is the secret of Jesus as Master? It is the secret of *service*. The men who have learned it go forth to serve as Christ's servants. They use His methods and no other. They breathe with His compassion. They burn with His zeal. They do the work He has given them to do. Every day men enter Christ's service, and bring noble gifts to its fulfilment. They bring learning, eloquence, splendid resourcefulness, untiring industry, charm of style, and personal fascination. "Verily, they have their reward." But they do not do Christ's work. They have not entered into His secret. There is an experience which teaches a

man more than the learning of the schools. He is led into it by his reverence and devotion and surrender to the will of God. Then, and not till then, can he do the Master's work. St. Francis of Assisi steeps his mind in the Gospels. He is caught and held by the winsome beauty of his Lord. He sees Him, in a fresh vision, going about doing good, and he goes through the villages of Italy, a gracious and tender presence, reminiscent of the compassion of Christ. John Wesley passes through his nights and days of enlightenment and consecration, rises into a new knowledge and an unshakable assurance of Christ's love, and goes out to the almost Pagan villages of England with his Master's message of life from the dead. Thomas Chalmers, rising from his sick-bed to spend a year of Elysium as he pulses with a new affection of joy to Christ, goes forth to pour all his roused energy into the evangelisation of Scotland. Father Damien—to take men of all communions—marks Jesus as he touches the leper. He sees the deep significance of the deed, and goes forth to lay his hands in Christ-like pity on the outcasts of Molokai. Thousands of humbler folk, in obscurer spheres and in simpler ways, take up the service of the Master in the care of the young, the rescue of the perishing, and the healing of the sick, in Christ's own way. Mark the law. They entered into Christ's secret, because they feared.

II. THE FRIEND'S SECRET.

We touch a subtler and deeper truth here. The bond between two friends is always a secret. It may be some knowledge of long past days which now holds you to your friend in an unbreakable fellowship. We never willingly suffer the pure and romantic intimacies of our boyhood to die out of our lives. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." There is always this instinctive attachment. As Emerson says, "My friends have come to me unsought; the great God gave them to me." But whatever may be the source and spring of our friendship, its mark is always this, that we reveal to the friend what we hide from others. Our joy and hope, our fear and sorrow, the sore in our body, the rankling wound in our mind, our dream and desire and longing, we pour into our friend's ear. So Jesus proved His friendship to His friends. Come to the upper room on the dark betrayal night. He has gathered around Him those men who had continued with Him in His temptations. But there is one man in the company who does not fear. He is not a friend of Jesus, and Christ is frost-bound in his presence. When Judas has gone out into the darkness, Jesus unlocks His heart. "Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in Him," Jesus cries, and pours forth His secret confidences to the eleven at the feast. He tells them the meaning of this disclosure of His mind, "Henceforth I call you not servants, but I have

called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father, I have made known unto you." What is the friend's secret? It is the secret of *knowledge*—the knowledge of ways and purposes, hopes and fears, aims and plans hidden from others. Others may guess and conjecture, others may question and criticise. Only the friend who fears, who has reverence, and awe, and the sympathetic insight, enters into the secret. The Pharisees came to Jesus with their tempting questions. The Sadducees laid their trap. The scribe and the lawyer propose their dilemma. Caiaphas sets Him in the dock and probes Him with his coarse finger. Herod torments Him with his callous and coarse-minded queries. Pilate holds parley with Him, and plies Him with his haughty interrogations. They learn nothing. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear.

We have had a strikingly clear illustration of this truth in our own time. For over half a century the supreme interest in Christian doctrine has centred upon the person of Christ. So absorbing has been the problem of the person of Christ that the fact and power of His work have fallen into an impoverishing neglect. In consequence of this absorption in the person of Christ, lives of Jesus have been pouring from the press. Three of these have been pre-eminent for their scholarship, the patience and skill of their research, the picturesqueness of their portraiture, and their in-

sight into the mind of Christ. One of these written in German, Strauss's *Leben Jesu*; another in French, Renan's *Vie de Jesu*; and another in English, Seeley's *Ecce Homo*. The Christian Church is under a deep debt of gratitude to them all. Their faultless knowledge, vivid narrative, and fresh insight have helped believing men to realise more clearly not only the human tenderness and moral beauty of Christ, but also His divine majesty. But their day is nearly over. Already they are lying neglected on our shelves. They were written by men who were scholars and critics but not friends of Christ. From them we turn again to the brief, simple, artless records of the evangelists, and learn not only what Jesus said and did, and how He walked and wept and loved, but also what He was and is and shall be to the souls of men. We enter into the secret of the Lord Who is our friend. From these subtle portraitures of the scholars, we can turn to the simplest believer who rises from the communion table where he has heard Christ's whisper, and known Him in a fresh adoration, and we learn more than Strauss or Renan or Seeley ever dreamed. For the Friend's secret is with them that fear.

III. THE LOVER'S SECRET.

We touch the tenderest issue here. Love is not love which has not its secret. Love is not love which has no reverence, no awe, no devotion, no trembling

fear. There is a passion which is not love but only a cold, amiable, and calculating benevolence. There is a baser passion which sometimes usurps and desecrates the name of love. It is earthly, sensual, devilish. Let men beware how they use so spiritual a word for so gross a thing. Love which is love indeed is always full of fear, swift to hear and to discern, swifter still to interpret and to understand. Two who love may be in one company. No word may pass between them, no sign be given, no gesture be made, not even a glance may be caught by the most watchful eye. Yet each is well aware, by a subtle, subconscious knowledge, of what the other is thinking and feeling and eager to say. For what is the lover's secret? The master's secret is the secret of service. The friend's secret is the secret of knowledge—the knowledge of ways and purposes and hopes hidden from others. The lover's secret is the *disclosure of character*, the revealing of the inner personality, the dear discovery to the beloved of the inward passion and delight.

The secret is with them that fear—and no other. Browning has set this truth in one of his saddest poems in "Men and Women." He tells the story of Andrea del Sarto, who was called the faultless painter of Florence. In his youth he had loved and married a woman of rare and radiant beauty. He rendered to her an almost worshipping homage. He longed to lift her to the high plane of thought

and desire and holy ambition on which he moved. But she was a shallow, thin-natured, mean-souled woman. She was the woman who smeared with a careless fling of her skirt the picture he had painted in hours of spiritual ecstasy. She was the woman who craved him for his hard-earned money, that she might spend it at the gaming-table with her dissolute companions. Browning sets down the tragedy of their years with his usual unerring insight. It was not that she disappointed him, robbed his hand of its power, dulled his mind, shadowed his heart, and, as he foresaw, would sully his fame. It was this more piteous thing, that he could not disclose himself to her. She was not able to see and to understand him at his highest and noblest. She never discerned the moral majesty of his mind or the spiritual hunger of his heart. The poet sets the sorrow of it all in a sigh, which is the climax of his story.

“But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler’s pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!”

Lover he was, with the lover’s secret, but she brought no mind, and the lover’s secret she never knew. For the lover’s secret is only with them that fear.

That was one of the sad experiences of Christ.

There were men whom He loved, who went away sorrowful because they brought no mind to enter into His secret, and they left a sadder heart behind. There was a city He loved, over which He wept, not only because of its doom, but because it knew not the day of its visitation. There was a race He loved, and longed after, and named His own, which knew Him not when He came. There was a world He loved and died for, which judged Him to be only a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, smitten of God and afflicted, and it judges so still. At times His own had their eyes holden. "Oh faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" is the cry of a love which is weary. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?" is the cry of love disappointed and in pain. But when He found men like Peter, and James, and John, He took them into the house of sorrow, and up into the Mount of Transfiguration, and into the depths of the Garden, and there He disclosed His character to them. As they sang in after years, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

As we have reached this high table-land of the truth that is in Jesus, the mystery of all revelation lies before us in clear and sunny prospect. Men ask us why the Old Testament Scriptures remain

the oracles of God to the race, and the supreme source of our knowledge of His dealing with mankind in the early ages, and with nations in their rise and fall. They ask why the New Testament scriptures have a wisdom and a power and a spirit that makes them the final word of God to all seeking and penitent souls. Men wonder why other scriptures, which Oriental learning places in our hands with eloquent eulogy, seem pale and trembling and hesitant when set beside these books of the Old Testament and the New. It is not as some men crudely and cheaply say, because the Jew had a genius for religion. The Jew may have a genius for finance and music and for the rapturous word, but he has no genius, beyond that of any other soul whom God has created, for hearing God's voice and obeying His will. There is no such thing as a genius for religion. Whenever the sense of need, and the compunction for wrong, and the craving to look into the unseen, have visited men, there is religion both possible and actual. These are as universal as humanity. But this is the distinction of the Jewish people, that amid much that was low and foul, wilful and rebellious, superstitious and idolatrous, there were men in a great succession who rose out of the mass and, as they feared, entered into the secret of the Lord. To them as to no others God was able, in Babylonia, on the hillsides of Syria, and in the silences of Horeb and Sinai and Carmel,

and Hermon, to make Himself known. To them, as to no others, Jesus, by the Lake of Galilee and the well of Samaria, in the quiet upper room, and in the home at Bethany, was able to disclose Himself. To this day there is but one door into the secret of the Lord, and that is the door of fear.

This truth can be seen in the light of every personal experience. It is always a shining glory in every noble spiritual history. It is set down with singular distinctness and vividness in the story of Moses. When Moses first enters into the knowledge of God, he knows Him only as his Master. Rudely and mistakenly, with the hot, impulsive, and lawless deeds of youth, he begins to serve the Most High. As years pass on, he lays himself down on God's altar, in a true faith and a meek submission, and becomes known as "Moses, the servant of the Lord." But he rises above the servant. He becomes the man to whom the Lord spoke as a man speaketh "face to face with his friend." Because he was the friend of God, He made known unto him His ways. The day came when Moses prayed, "Show me Thy glory." What is God's glory? What did Moses crave to see and to know? God's glory is His character. It was the lover's cry to see that inner world of beauty, which love can disclose only to love's deep-seeing eyes. The Jewish legend ran that when Moses lay dying on the mount, God

stooped and kissed him on his lips, because He was his lover, and had revealed His secret to him. He had shown to him, as He will to us, the secret of the master and the friend and the lover, because he "feared."

II

THE QUIET SEASONS OF THE SOUL

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi."—MATT. xvi. 13.

THE broad impression given by the Gospels of the ministry of Jesus is that of unhasting and unresting activity. He lived through those three years with radiant calm on His brow and the peace of God in His heart; but a sense of burden and of urgency was ever upon His spirit. To make long journeys on scanty fare, to heal the sick until His virtue passed from Him, to speak to crowds which thronged and pressed and stared, and to hold debate with keen and censorious and scheming opponents, would exhaust the strength of the strong. We are given glimpses of the wear and strain of this full and strenuous life. He sat weary by the well. He fell asleep in the midst of the storm. He went up the way of His cross in a weakness which was evident to the most callous eye. He explains the strenuousness of His few years when He says, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten Me up."

A life which keeps a stream in full strong flood

must be fed from never-failing streams. This life of Christ was not maintained at its high level of toil without frequent renewal. He often sought the peace and solitude and refreshment of a calm Syrian night. He led His disciples to the silence of the mountain-top. Time and again He left Capernaum and its crowds to cross the lake to the unfrequented other side. He loved to walk among the olives of Gethsemane. He sought rest and quiet in the home at Bethany. Jesus placed a high value on the quiet seasons of the soul.

I. The most clearly marked and the most momentous of these withdrawals of Jesus from the stress of His crowded life was His going north to the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi. Cæsarea Philippi lay thirty miles from the Lake of Galilee at the upper end of the valley of the Jordan. The Anti-Lebanons, at whose base it lies, are crowned by Mount Hermon, with its everlasting snow. The forests which creep up the slopes give shelter and shadow. Green glades run along the watercourses. A picturesque beauty makes it a place of delight to the eye. But the chief attraction of the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi was their remoteness. Here stillness and restfulness could be found as in one of our own unpeopled Highland glens. To that distant and silent spot Jesus led His disciples for a ten days' retreat.

This religious retreat occurs at the close of the

active and evangelising ministry of Christ. He will never again pass as an evangelist through Galilee or Samaria. He will enter Jerusalem only as its Prophet and Priest and King. His ministry might be pictured as a long ascent up the slopes and spurs of a high mountain range. As one who might climb the Andes, and attain summit after summit from which he could look back, and from which he could descry the height that still rose before him, so Jesus passed on to the time of this retreat at Cæsarea Philippi. Here He stands upon the highest summit of His life. He has to make only a swift descent to the cross. From this high mountain of His experience the cross stands out naked, bare, awaiting His outstretched arms. Within six months He would be crucified upon it. He sought this solitude in this distant region, that He might see His way and school His spirit for the end. He took His disciples with Him that they might be enlightened and purged and disciplined, and so prepared for what lay before Him and them. That schooling and discipline, that enlightenment and knowledge, could be given only in a quiet season of the soul. Here they heard Him ask questions that were never before upon His lips. Here they heard Him make demands which shook their hearts and strained their faith. Here they heard Him utter that strange first prophecy: "From that time forth Jesus began to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer." Here they saw

His glory. Here He revealed the purpose of His life, and strengthened His own hand and theirs in God. That is the supreme value of these quiet seasons of the soul.

II. What do we gain in these quiet seasons of the soul which are a necessity of the religious life? When we seek the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi what may we expect as gifts from God?

The first and simplest gain is rest. One of the marked features of our modern strenuous and hustled lives is fatigue. Large numbers of men and women are being constantly overdriven. The rush of life is incessant, and the pace is daily becoming more rapid. The competition in all ranks is becoming more keen. The risks which many men must take every morning are as heart-shaking as a gambler's throw. Even men whose frames are iron, whose pulses beat like a pendulum, whose nerves are steel, are at last broken and maimed. They are compelled, as James Payn wrote of himself, to lie in a "backwater" of life. The breakdown of even the strongest is a common feature. Nerve troubles claim their victims from every home. Insanity is appallingly on the increase, and suicide has again become a too common method of escape. The moral effects of this stress and strain are more saddening than the physical. The happiness of life is continually imperilled and often lost. The peace of men's homes is broken. The alienations and separations of so many are simply

the quarrels of the worn, and the spent, and the overstrained. When a man returns from hours of hustle and drive, exhausted and chafed, to a home where a woman has been overburdened throughout a long day, a single word of complaint, or a sharp demand, too often ends in a bitter and sundering dispute. There is less efficiency even in our work. A razor will not work without its season of quiet. The fine steel becomes fatigued. Those complex and delicate machines, which throb, and beat, and run like living creatures, demand their periods of rest, or they will fret and revolt. But most serious of all is the spiritual distaste and blight which men suffer. To a worn and over-strained man faith and hope in God are difficult and prayer is a burden. The man who thinks he needs a holiday that he may recruit the exhausted energies of body and brain and nerve is aware of only half the truth. A great part of his weariness is weariness of spirit. He needs a quiet season of the soul.

The second gain is stillness. We seldom realise how wearing and distracting and deadening is noise. The men who work in the large boiler shops where the clang of hammers never ceases become not only deaf but listless and jaded. It is not simply that they cannot go to a fine music or catch the tones of an unfamiliar voice. They have ceased to care to hear any one's voice, and are glad to escape into a silence. Nature is surely teaching them what they need. Men and women who live and toil in

this workshop and warehouse of our modern world also grow deaf and listless and jaded. They forget the great words and names and interests which once they loved. They lose the power to hear the voices of the spirit. They even cease to care whether they hear them or not. They need some time of silence, some season of quiet, when these low sweet voices of the spirit shall make themselves heard even by the wearied ear. There are cities which have been built right on the seaboard of the ocean. The boom and crash of the waves as they break in surf on the beach can be heard far inland. But the men and women who toil in the midst of the city's roar and traffic never hear the sounding and rush of the waters at all. Now and again a stranger will stand in their streets, and to his fresh ear every wave makes its fall upon the sand clear and appealing. But when night comes on, and the city lies in stillness, then also these worn and hustled toilers hear the waters as they break and spread over the sands. We also need some time of quiet when the traffic of our life stops, when, in the restfulness which may be given us and the silence which may be forced upon us, we shall hear solemn questions we have ignored, and high calls we have denied. We need the stillness of a quiet season of the soul.

The third gain is recollectedness. There is no better word than this wise old Puritan term, to mark this still greater gain of the quiet season of the soul. We need to recollect what we are, and

why we live. We need to recollect our aims, our purposes, our young and heroic ideals, the inspirations and hopes of our best hours. In the stress and strain of life we often cease to consider what it is all about. Dr. Johnson said that "A man could not be much better employed than in making money." We understand what this wise and clear-sighted moralist meant. He saw that the making of money was often a moral achievement. He meant to remind men of the industry, and forethought, and perseverance, and self-denial, required in the making of money. He meant to say that it was a bit of practical morality for a man to be busy in earning his own and his children's daily bread. But Dr. Johnson's saying is not urgently needed in our day. If a man is busy always and only making money, as so many men are, he is nourishing a life that is dull indeed. He has need to be reminded that "Man shall not live by bread alone." He has need to be asked, "How much is a man better than a sheep?" Above all, he has need of this quickening grace of recollectedness. He has need to remember that he should be, as Milton said—

"A being of large discourse, looking before and after."

He has need to remember what life is for—the high and holy purposes of the years, the spiritual issue of its hope and fear and loss and gain, which alone explain its events and vicissitudes. He has need to

remember the value of the soul, the power, the nearness, and the love of God, and he has need to stand still at times and see himself as he really is. This he can do only in some quiet season of the soul.

The fourth gain is a discipline for the days to come. The simple secret not only of passing through our strong and sudden temptations, of enduring a disheartening reverse, and of sustaining bravely and cheerfully a desolating loss, but also of living out our lives with sweetness and calm, and completing them without shame, is to be disciplined in spirit. It is too late to adjust the ballast when the squall has struck our boat. It is too late to call our hearts to believe when our dearest hopes have been disappointed. In the trying days of life, and in the monotonous and prosaic journeys of every day, we reveal and we fix unalterably only what we have become in the quiet hours of dream and desire. How marked this is in Christ's experience! The quiet days of Nazareth prepared Jesus for that hour when He would realise His Father's business. The long waiting of the silent years made Him ready for the day of His call. In the lonely fasting of the wilderness He was steeled for His assailing temptations. Here in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, in meditation and in prayer, He prepared Himself for His cross, and His disciples for their apostleship. There are days and hours before us all, events which we cannot escape, changes which are sure to come; and we shall play our part only as we have known the

discipline of a quiet season of the soul. It was while Jesus held His disciples in this remote region, far from the noise and fretting and strife of men, with the whole land which He loved lying at His feet, that by rest and stillness and recollectedness and discipline He made ready for the days to come.

III. All this rises up to an imperative duty. That duty is to make and to guard with jealous care every quiet season of the soul. Never were the articles of our common faith less denied than to-day. Never was belief in God so unquestioned, and so certainly part of the common thought of Christendom. But never was worship so lightly regarded, and never was the time of stillness and recollectedness and prayer so entirely overlooked. The average Christian does not seem to be aware that he imperils his own religious spirit, and paralyses his children's faith, by his contempt for the quiet seasons of the soul. Here in this retreat to the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, and in the record of its occupations, and the story of its attainments, we have an object lesson of the imperative duty of using wisely the days of rest and quiet. Is there any man who spends his Sabbath neither in rest, nor in stillness, nor in recollectedness, nor in the discipline of meditation? He is suffering an irreparable loss to body, to mind, to heart, and to spirit. Is there any man who never makes a silence round the Lord and himself in a time of prayer? Does

he never shut his door and pray to his Father in secret? I do not speak of those morning and evening thanksgivings and intercessions which all serious and believing men practise. These are of incalculable value. But much more important and more regarded by God are those special occasions when we pass to the coasts of our Cæsarea Philippi, that we may spend some quiet times with God. Or is there any man who regards his holiday as merely a time when he can abandon the usual restraints of his religious life, when he can see sights that are commonly and wisely denied him, and can mix in companies of which in his better moments he is inwardly ashamed? Is there any one who regards his yearly release from the humdrum and monotonous mill of life as a time merely for frivolous and worldly recreations? He is missing one of the spiritual opportunities God has given him. The man who returns from his holiday only renewed in body and mind, but not rebaptized in spirit has missed its deepest joy and highest good. As important for many of us may be some few days of religious retreat. Some look askance at meetings for the deepening of spiritual life, and at religious conventions and conferences. Sometimes, it must be confessed, there is a lack of perspective in their doctrine, a morbidness in their introspection, and a tendency to focus men's minds on side issues and the small details of pious observances. Now and again those who attend them have too little

sympathy with men and women who have never learned to pronounce their shibboleth and speak with their accent. Yet it would be well for many men who are absorbed in the affairs of a busy and strenuous and exciting life, to spend some days of quiet, of silence, of recollectedness and discipline, with those who are sincerely seeking a blessing for their souls.

There is one aspect of this imperative call which assails me with a sense of fear. To use Paul's deep and many-sided words, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." I am often called to urgency in this appeal by the plain evidence of God's dealing. The man who will not make and guard a quiet season for his soul is compelled to take one. God lays him down on a bed of sickness and weakness and pain. He thinks it to be a strange incident, or an untimely accident. It is God calling upon him to be still that he may hear and know His voice. I see some woman who is eager to feel herself alive as she plays her part in some circle of gaiety, or becomes a leader in some enterprise which gives her conspicuousness and a name. Misfortune falls upon her estate. Death enters her home. The little child whom she loves, and yet neglects for her social aims, is stricken into a helplessness which will never pass away. As she spends her quiet hours in the simpler offices which have an eternal value, she enters into the secret of the Lord. A youth will sometimes run his head-

long course, and heed neither voices without, nor the still small voice within. But he receives some check which humbles him, and in the hour of darkness he sees what was hidden from his eyes. A young girl begins her life with light laughter, and gay song, and the proud belief that she can fashion her days after her will. She is quick with mock and pout at every serious call. But when the thing she has set her heart upon, and seemed about to attain, is strangely taken from her, the lines come out upon her face, the light no longer dazzles in her eyes. In some quiet season of the soul she has come to know God.

The supreme blessing of these quiet seasons of the soul is not the chastening of the spirit, not the strengthening of the will, not the calming of the passions, and not even the learning of contentment with the will of God. The supreme blessing of them is always a *revelation*. It is a revelation of life, of duty, of God's ways, of God's means. It often comes in a flash of insight. It sometimes rises like a dawn, beautiful, entrancing, enlightening. Robert Pollok is a poet now almost forgotten. His "Course of Time" does not entitle him to be placed in the first flight of poets. It has no haunting word, and no wizardry of music, and few unforgettable lines. But its whole conception is large and noble, and it has the deep passion and wide survey of an epic. He tells us how he was given the conception of his poem. The knowledge of God's

ways, and the understanding of many of the ruling Christian truths, had long been his, but they filled his mind only as broken and unconnected thoughts. He sought a quiet season of the soul. As he pondered and as he prayed, the whole course of God's dealing in time as it is revealed in the Scriptures flashed upon him. He was still with delight. He trembled with emotion. The whole story of God revealed in Christ took captive his imagination. With what power he could command he sat down to pen his poem. With a grace that was sufficient to make his life even better than his music he lived out his days. In such an hour, although it may be with less emotion and less dramatic passion, a man receives the revelation of God and of the life beautiful, and he makes his life a poem.

III

VERDICT AND CONFESSION

“Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that Thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”—MATT. xvi. 13-16.

WE wonder that among the cartoons of Raphael there is no picture of the Master and His disciples on the way to the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi. What a study that would have been for this subtle interpreter of the emotions, as they declared themselves in the pose of the figure and the expression of the face! It was not a company of light-hearted men who went northwards with Jesus. All of them were weary. Some of them were disheartened. A few were dismayed at the rising storm of hostility to Christ, and discouraged by the numbers who had gone back and walked no more with Him. One member of the band was brooding disloyalty. Yet over the Twelve there was an air of relief. They had cast off their burden for a time. They were going to pass into

less troubled waters. But the central personality of the band has a shadow on His face. He is usually in advance and alone, wrapped in a silence which is partly deep meditation and partly prayer.

The little company was vaguely aware that they had come to a crisis in the history of their movement. The next step was not clear to men who were entangled by their earth-born conceptions of the Kingdom of God, and swayed by their ambitions of place and power in it. That next step was not too definite even to Christ Himself. His steps, like those of our own, were ordered by the Lord one by one. He knew that His ministry to the multitude was practically over. To nurture and to school and to perfect the faith of the men who were loyal to Him must now be His task. Both for His sake and for theirs they must rise above those vague and earthly conceptions of His person and His purpose. He must make to them a great disclosure. When they have reached the place of their retreat, and the peace of their quiet season of the soul has fallen, He will search their minds, purge them of their low ideals, and reveal what as yet their eyes have not seen. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" He begins. When that question has cleansed their minds and probed their hearts, He turns upon them with the question of His real concern: "But whom say ye that I am?" The answers to the first question condense the verdicts on Christ passed by the men of His time.

The answer to the second is the confession of the first Christian who passed that boundary which separates those who "know the Lord" from those who know Him not. Peter's reply evokes from Him that benediction which is the first song of the way to the cross.

I. Let us look, to begin with, at *the verdicts passed on Christ*.

The disciples, with a fine delicacy, do not report the idle and thoughtless gossip of the evil-minded slander of the day. There were some who said that He was a glutton and a wine-bibber. Others mocked at Him as a friend of publicans and sinners. Others sneered at Him as the carpenter turned prophet. Others surmised that He was a political enthusiast. Others regarded Him as a simple and dreamy mystic. The disciples ignored these ill-judged and occasionally venomous characterisations. They report the serious talk of the market-place, and the supper-table, and the door of the synagogue. We are at first, and until we think, somewhat surprised at these verdicts. But we must not forget that those who passed them had no copy of the Gospels in their hand, and that Christ is better known to the twentieth century than He was to the men who saw the craftsman's hands and the worn sandals on His feet. And when we examine these verdicts we shall find them strangely repeated in the judgments men hold about Christ in our own day.

"Some say that Thou art John the Baptist." This was the view of many who had heard of John the Baptist and remembered the religious awakening under his preaching. It was the view of Herod Antipas when he heard of the words and works of Christ. It is the judgment to this day of all mere worldlings. To Herod, and to all his spiritual kin, Jesus, with His snow-white purity of life, His simplicity and austerity of habit, His fearless denunciation of evil in men of all places and all ranks, His call to repentance and holiness, is only John the Baptist again. The only religious faculty which has not died out in some men is the conscience, and to the conscience of a godless and reckless man the call of Jesus is only the call of a voice crying in the wilderness, "Repent."

"Some, Elias." This was the wiser and more discerning verdict of those who saw that Jesus did not follow the methods of John the Baptist, and did more than repeat his teaching. But the purpose of Christ was so plainly to call men to a new faith in God, and a new life before Him, that they believed that He must be that Elijah, Who should appear before the King came to restore the kingdom to his people. They remembered that Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom, that He cleansed the temple, that He healed the widow's son, that He spoke with fearless rebuke of the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, that He paid no deference to those who sat in high places ;

and they passed their verdict on Him that He was Elijah. To this day there are numbers who tell us that for them Jesus is the Elijah who proclaims and precedes the coming of the kingdom. The writers in the magazines, the journalists in such secular newspapers as the *Clarion* and its compeers, the advocates of Socialism in market-place and square, see in Jesus only the herald and harbinger of a time of earthly blessing and social good. Even within the Church of Christ there are men who fail to see the face whose deeper shadow was caused neither by men's poverties, nor by their pain, but by their sin. These are among those who still think of Him as Elijah.

"And others, Jeremias." We are able to understand more easily why many passed this verdict that Christ was a second Jeremiah. They saw Him moved with compassion. They heard Him sigh when He healed the dumb. They marked Him in constant protest against the unbelieving and Sadducean authorities of His day. They discerned the sorrow which dwelt in His eyes when men turned back from Him and mocked at His prophecies. They looked with wondering thought on His meekness, and lowliness, and tenderness, combined with that dauntless and even reckless courage which feared no man. To them He was the second Jeremiah. Is this verdict no longer passed upon Christ? To thousands of men and women Christ is only the gentle Jesus, meek and lowly,

compassionate and entreating, with tears in His eyes and warning words on His lips. Any one who is acquainted with the great portraits of Jesus, especially those of a past generation, know how often these painters portrayed the face of a Jeremiah for the face of Christ. The literature which claims to interpret the life of Christ through His deeds and words, and not through His mission and His cross, really ranks Him no higher than Jeremiah. The men who have forgotten that He began His ministry at a wedding feast, took up little children in His arms, was a joyous guest in the home at Bethany, and that He came eating and drinking, pass upon Him still the verdict—"Jeremiah."

"Or one of the prophets." This was the most finely balanced and deeply perceiving of the four verdicts. Jesus was to these men one of the prophets, a teacher come from God, another of that sublime succession which began with Moses, and passed down through the great names of Samuel, and Nathan, and Amos, and Hosea, and Isaiah, the long line of lonely and heroic men who spoke the word of the Lord. It is the verdict which the best minds of our own age, who are not within the Christian Church, are eager to pass. Jesus Christ is to them the prophet of humanity. His wisdom, His purity, His insight, the reach and grasp of His thought, the depths and pathos and poetry of His words, the unique simplicity of His teaching, evoke their glowing eulogies. They know how far

He stands above the ascetic Baptist, and the fiery prophet of Carmel, and the weeping and ineffectual preacher of the dark days of Jerusalem. They know that He is not the Christ of the monk who scourges his flesh, or of the democratic reformer who would use Christ to multiply the loaves and fishes, although he denies His claims, or of the tender sentimentalists for whom He is a figure to idealise. But precisely as these wise and thoughtful observers fell pitifully below a true conception of what Christ was, and what Christ came to do, so do their modern successors fall below the true conception of Him who came not merely to teach, but to redeem, when they call Him only "one of the prophets."

II. Mark, in the second place, *the confession of the disciple*.

Between verdict and confession there lies a religious experience. A verdict is at its best only the honest opinion of an outsider. It is an estimate and a judgment after the summing up of such evidence as may be laid before the mind. It is often ludicrously, and sometimes shamefully, ignorant and biassed. It is often the conclusion of one who has not seen nor heard nor felt the power of the facts. Jesus is not wholly indifferent to the verdicts of men, but His wistful craving is to hear men pass on from verdict to confession. A confession is the assent and consent of the mind and the heart

and will, followed by the devotion of the life. A verdict says in measured tones, "Christ is one of the prophets." A confession cries in adoring rapture, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

To understand how a man passes from verdict to confession would be to understand the mysteries of a Christian experience. We can read it, if we will, in the records of the New Testament, as they declare how Peter and James and John and Paul and Timothy rose to the height of being confessors of Christ. We can trace many of the outward steps by which they approached the consummating experience. But there is an inward and unexplored passage, which a man cannot always explain to himself, before the faith of the confessor is born in his heart. It is to that truth Jesus refers when He responds to Simon Peter's word, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." "Flesh and blood," said Jesus, "hath not revealed it unto thee." He is stating that profound and moving truth that the birth of faith in the soul is the act of God Himself. As John affirms, "Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We learn Christ's words, we study His deeds, we consider His character, we ponder in our brooding hours His passion for righteousness and His love and death for men. Then, often in a moment, there rises upon us a vision of One who is more

than a prophet, One of whom we can hardly speak in the terms of a verdict, One whose personality becomes the most real of all personalities in the world, One to whom we must make the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

There is no real and accurate analogy to this experience in nature, not even in human nature, which can make it clear to those who do not know it. It is "the secret of the Lord," and it must remain the secret, except to those who have crossed the threshold of the shrine. But there is a human experience which may help us to understand how the living Christ becomes to a believer the most potent personality and the adorable Lord. Dr. Francis Galton relates an incident which at least shows the possibilities, for every soul, of seeing the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. "I have once in my life experienced the influence of personal ascendancy in that high degree which some great personalities have exercised, and the occasion of which I speak was the more striking owing to the absence of concurrent pomp. It was on Garibaldi's arrival in London, where he was hailed as a hero. I was standing in Trafalgar Square when he reached it, driving up Parliament Street. His vehicle was a shabby open carriage, stuffed with Italians, regardless of style in dress; Garibaldi alone was standing. I had not been in a greatly excited or exalted mood, but the simplicity, goodness, and nobility impressed on every lineament

of Garibaldi's face and person quite overcame me. I realised then, what I never did before or after, something of the impression that Jesus seems to have exercised on multitudes on more than one occasion. I am grateful to that experience for revealing to me the hero-worshipping potentialities of my nature."¹ There came to this calm and critical scientific inquirer as he stood silent, observant, absorbed, the impression of the simplicity and goodness and nobility of a single-minded, great-hearted man. It revealed to him the potentialities of his nature. When men see Christ in the light of the Spirit of God, they see not only His simplicity and goodness and nobility, but they see His infinite purity and infinite pity, and infinite passion of love, and they rise up to the knowledge of His eternal sonship to God. They will know that flesh and blood has not made that revelation.

This experience differs as men differ, in temperament and in training, in knowledge and in years. We must never forget that simple believers seldom have as passionate a repentance and as deep a flood of surging emotion as great sinners who have become great saints, and large minds who have become inspiring teachers. It is not required that our repentance be deep and agonising. It is required only that it be true. It is not required that our faith be piercing and buoyantly confident; it is required only that it be sincere and unfeigned.

¹ *Memoirs of My Life*, p. 284.

Yet this experience which rises to confession is indispensable. Every soul which will know the secret must follow in the footsteps of Peter. When and how we enter into it must be as God wills. Whether it be in some hour of shame, or after some days of brooding, or in some moment of unusual clearness of vision, or as Montgomery sets it in his chaste paraphrase of the 63rd Psalm—

“When, praying in the holy place,
Thy power and glory I have seen,
And marked the footsteps of Thy grace!”

lies in the gracious predestination of God, as surely as it lies in His power. But I may daringly cite the experience recorded in the letter of a young and unstained girl. She had sought the assurance of Christ's Godhead for months. She had been taught to know and to revere Jesus from her childhood. But she could not rise to the great height of calling Him “Christ the Lord.” “I went out one night,” she writes. “In my hidden disquiet I wished I had a father or a mother to speak to, but they were gone. I felt myself out of touch with God, and even with goodness, and was rebellious against my lot. I had almost resolved that my work in church, my Sunday-school teaching, must stop, for I knew that I could not think of Christ as my mother had done. I passed out to where the road was lonely and silent, and looking upward I let my mind dwell on Christ, on His life and words, on His stainless holiness, and on His cross. I let myself imagine

that His words were false, and at last I let myself think that He had never lived at all. Then I stood still. My heart almost ceased to beat. Like a returning tide, a solemn certainty flooded my mind, a sure conviction, as of one very near to me, laid hold on me. I need not tell you more, but I went home believing in the Lord, and eager to confess Him." That is how Peter and all who join in his confession come to their hour. Make yourself familiar with all the verdicts of men. But give Christ His opportunity—some brooding hour, some day of strain, some night of shame and defeat, some time of wistful yearning—and He will probe and search you with His questions. While He questions, the Father will reveal His Son to you, and in you, and you will stand with the disciple's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

III. When Jesus asked His questions at His disciples He had a twofold reason. He asked them not only for His disciples' sake, but for His own. Peter's answer was a sign from heaven. It was the chiming of the hour on the clock, and the chime was struck by the hand of God. But the question is asked of us to-day wholly for our own well-being. A generation ago the most solemn and searching question a man could ask was, "What must I do to be saved?" To-day the emphasis falls elsewhere. The most pressing and vital question of our time is, "What think ye of

Christ?" But the question of a past generation, and the question of to-day, reach the same issue for the soul. Every soul stands high or low as it acknowledges Christ. Every soul is saved or lost as it confesses Christ. To have lived, and toiled, and loved, and never to have seen the Lord is to have missed not only the prize of life, but to have lost everything worth having, and certainly to have lost one's soul. The man who has confessed Christ in truth has entered into the kingdom of God. He has seen the splendour and glory of a spiritual world. He has had that passion for holiness which is the most delightful and uplifting and sustaining of all desires. He has attained a knowledge which is a constant well of healing and comfort and peace. What I am then toward Christ, and what He is to me, determine my real character. Character, life, destiny are all wrapped up in the answer to the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" I cannot help believing that when a man stands anywhere and makes his confession, whether it be the first confession of his faith, or the confession and testimony of his loyalty before men, in brave word and costly deed, there falls upon his spirit that benediction of Christ, "Blessed art thou; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

IV

MY CHURCH

“Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona ; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”—MATT. xvi. 17, 18.

THESE words have acted like a dreadful fate in the world. They have been interpreted as variously and diversely as a Delphic oracle. Round the inside of the vast and lofty dome of St. Peter's at Rome, the words, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church,” have been set in letters of gold. They express the sincere and passionate belief of those who worship beneath them that Jesus bestowed on Peter and his successors the spiritual dominion of the world, and gave him and them the earthly authority over the souls and lives of men. An Archbishop sits in Canterbury whose title and whose claim is a protest against this interpretation. He traces his order and authority back through an unbroken succession to Peter and his fellows, and reads these words as the sanction of his office and his service. Those who

deny the accuracy of his history, and the fairness of his reading of the words of Christ, he places beyond the pale of the visible Church. But there are millions of men who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity who deny both these interpretations. When they meet for the government or discipline of their worshipping assemblies they also claim that these words are the ground of their authority. They believe that these assemblies are only an enlargement of this first little company to whom Jesus spoke, and that, so long as they can make Peter's confession and be inspired by Peter's faith, they shall overcome the gates of hell. Such has been the burden which these words have cast upon Christian minds, that scholarship has bitten into them with its critical acid to see if they were really spoken by Jesus. But their strangeness, and daring, and depth of meaning, and even their form, bear the hall-mark of the mint of Christ.

Now the surest and soundest interpretation of a word of Christ is always the simplest. We might learn more of the mind of Christ could we read His word without the prepossessions of our training and our traditions. Let us endeavour to forget these opposing and defiant expositions. Let us attempt to leave the controversies of past centuries behind us. Let us endeavour to purge our hearts of self-will and of partisan feeling. Let us pray to be led into the thoughts of Christ. In two ways we may

be able to escape into a calmer and a clearer atmosphere. We can, to begin with, recall the time and the place and the circumstances under which these words were spoken. We can conjure up that quiet glade in the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi on whose green sward the Master sat with His disciples at His feet. We can look into the faces of these unlearned and ignorant men, whose hands were rough with their toil. We can remember the deep devotion of their hearts and the spiritual insight of the foremost among them. Then we may be able to understand what Christ meant these words to tell these unlessoned and yet loyal and quickened hearts. In the next place, we can keep in mind how these words were interpreted by the mind and in the life of the New Testament believers. It is a position which no Christian mind can refuse to accept, that what Peter and James and John and Paul strove to realise was their understanding of the purpose of Christ. This was His disclosure of the purpose of His ministry, and we can be sure that any interpretation of it which will not accord with the New Testament reading is not loyal to the thought of Christ. Whatever theory of the development of the Church men may hold, or whatever adjustment of its forms and agencies men may consider themselves at liberty to make, no man who is loyal to Christ dare contradict the teaching of these words of His, as those who heard them accepted them.

I. In the first place, it is clear that the Church is *a society founded by Christ*.

He calls it significantly "My Church," and it was the one thing He ever called His own. Jesus wrote no book. He consecrated no holy place. He left behind no form of church government and no directory of worship. He named no successor. This only He did—He founded a society which was to be a brotherhood of believing men gathered round His person to carry on His work.

The word Church was neither new nor doubtful in meaning to His disciples. It was the rendering they found in that Greek Bible they had in their hands for one of the most sacred and significant terms of the Old Testament. The Greek word *ἐκκλησία* is the translation of the Hebrew expression for "the congregation of the Lord." Peter and his fellow-disciples could not fail to realise that Jesus was forming the little band who had accompanied with Him into a definite and organised religious community. They were no longer a company of men who formed the *school* of a Master. They were the *Church*, the society, the congregation of Christ. That society was seen in those twelve men who looked up with wondering eyes and flushed faces to Him whom they had confessed. It was seen again in the upper room at the supper table. It was seen again in Jerusalem as, together with the women, they waited on God in prayer, and the number of the names was about

an hundred and twenty. It was seen again when the believers met in the first Council at Jerusalem, and the apostles and elders came together to consider. It was seen also by the New Testament men whenever men and women met for prayer and for service to Christ. Ruskin has pointed out how the New Testament use of the word church emphasises this simple and unecclesiastical meaning of the term.¹ It can be seen to-day where two or three are gathered together in His name. To be gathered together in His name means for some purpose He has ordained, which can be fulfilled through His Spirit, under a sense of His presence. "Ubi Christus, ibi ecclesia." Where Christ is, there is the Church. It is the organ through which the great truths He preached, those of God, of the meaning and worth of His words and life and passion and redemption, are declared. It is the witness to His resurrection, the evangelist of His message, the pillar and ground of His truth, the fold of His flock. Like every other society it must have its officers and its ceremonies. Like every other society it must have its function and its services. These have been simply and fully described as "The word, sacraments, and prayer." Whatever more men shall plead they may and should add to the form and fashion of the Church of Christ, nothing more than this was understood by the men of Christ's own time. Nothing more is desired by

¹ Ruskin, *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds*.

men who love the New Testament, and live in it, and look with scrutinising eyes on the decisions of councils, which seem to them to forget its simplicities.

II. In the second place, it is clear that *the Church is a society composed of men whose hearts had been touched by God.*

Peter has this unique and unapproachable distinction that he was the first Christian. Yet, as we read this record, we find that others of the band were not far behind him in their faith, if they were behind him at all. They were only, it may be, less swift and impulsive in the expression of their faith. But what Jesus marks is that Peter won his place in the Church because he had received a revelation, not through flesh and blood, but from the Father in heaven. They were a band of men whose hearts God had touched. A quickening experience of the power of God is the only true credential of membership in Christ's society. There was a day when some who had followed with Him, and become His disciples, went back and walked no more with Him. As Jesus saw them turning their backs upon Him, He comforted His saddened heart by reminding Himself of this truth, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." And then He adds, lest any trembling disciple should think He is closing the gate, "And him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." For the indispensable qualification for membership in Christ's

society is not the rite of a church, not the word of confirmation by a priest, not the assent to the articles of a creed. Christ must meet every member of His society at the threshold with the words, "Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

The greatest hindrance to the victory of this society of Christ, and the supreme sorrow of all loyal hearts within it, has been the low standard of its Christian character, and the apostasy of those traitor hearts who have sometimes found a place among its leaders. The root of this low level of life, and the source of this treachery, has always been the failure to maintain this test of a personal experience. Wherever Christian teachers sanction membership on the ground of a proper age, a sufficient knowledge, a Christian training, or a due regard for religious observances, unworthy lives and heedless practices abound. So long as the winnowing fan of persecution blew away the chaff there was little but wheat in the garner of God and the society of Christ. When the cleansing fires of a searching poverty, a costly service, and an open outcastness, purged believers' hearts of pride and ambition, Christ's society was the ideal of a godly chivalry. But when the Church grew rich and powerful, and when title and rank became appanages of its leaders, and office in it became a coveted distinction, then this solemn test of a personal touch with God was evaded. Christ's

society was no longer a community and brotherhood of pure and lowly men. Whatever rank, or place, or authority any man has held in any church in Christendom, it is a simple certainty that Christ has not welcomed him in at all, if he has had no revelation from God. Thoreau spoke of men whose pretence to be Christian was ridiculous, for they had no genius for it. Matthew Arnold said of John Wesley that he had "a genius for godliness." But nothing can be more misleading than to use such terms as these. They are a distinct denial of Christ's great truth that God's revelation of grace is made not to the wise and prudent, but to babes. There have been men of a real genius for morality, but there is no such thing as a genius for religion. The most reckless and godless wretch, whose name has been a synonym for coarse and blatant atheism, about whom Thoreau and Matthew Arnold would say that he had a genius for devilry, has become a splendid and glorious saint. Wherever there is a soul there is a genius for godliness. But that soul must have come nakedly and openly under the power of God. Then and not till then does he pass into Christ's society.

III. In the third place, it is clear that the Church is *a society founded on the confession that Jesus is the Christ.*

"On this rock," said Jesus, "I will build My Church." The interpretation that Jesus, in this solemn moment, was playing upon words seems to me too puerile for

discussion. The exposition that Jesus was building His Church on the rock "Peter" is contradicted by all the facts of the Gospel history. It was this same Peter whom Jesus, within a few days from this high encomium, denounced as Satan. It was this same Peter who forsook Christ and fled. It was this same Peter who mistook the breadth and length and depth of Christ's universal love to men, and was guilty of dissimulation, who was withstood to his face. It was this same Peter who appears in the first Church Council not as its president, but as one of its speakers. The obvious meaning of Christ's words is this: that the confession which Peter has now made is the rock on which the Church of Christ is built. Wherever there is a man who has risen to the height of seeing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, then and there a Christian Church will be built. Peter coming first in that confession, and in that spirit, has a unique honour and a deserved prestige. As long as he continues in that faith and in that spirit, he remains one of those foundation stones built on Jesus Christ, the chief corner stone. All who make that confession with him, all of like faith and like mind, are foundation stones with him. Holding that faith, he is a priest of the kingdom of priests unto God. Losing it, even for a night, he is a nothing and a nobody. Whoever, like him, will confess Jesus to be the Christ, is also one of the royal priesthood. Upon that single and sufficient article of the faith Jesus has built His society.

The historic proof of this is so large and so plain that it cannot be missed. Nothing else can be made, or has been made, the article of a standing or a falling Church without producing division and disunion. The unity of the New Testament Church was a real unity, although it had not that close incorporation which its members plainly desired. Partly because of the dispersion of the believers by the strong gusts of persecution, and partly because of the distance and remoteness of its Christian settlements, it was not able to maintain that organic unity which was plainly the ideal of the Master and the apostles to whom He gave this solemn charge. But only one heresy was thought sufficient to cause men to separate one from the other. That was the denial that Jesus is the Christ. "Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." That is the warning note, high, clear, keen with fear, and hot with love's desire, against the coming in of men who claim Christ's name, yet do not confess Him Christ.

In all subsequent history this has been found to be the irreconcilable antagonism. Modes of church government, forms of worship, the names of office-bearers, where these carry no false doctrine in their heart, rites and postures, have seldom sundered the braver and the finer spirits from each other.

But wherever there has been a slight cast upon this article of confession, division, as swift and separating as the stroke of a sword, has been seen. Even when an outward and organic union has been maintained, the rent in the garment of Christ has been wide and irreparable. In the dark eighteenth century, when Deism infected the Church of Christ in England and Scotland, and men who had accepted the cure of parishes in Christ's name denied His deity, the schism between the members of the Church was deeper than that between the denominations of our day. Between John Wesley and the bishops, who frowned upon his zeal and shut the door of their churches on his people, and between Thomas Boston and the polished theatre-going, card-playing ministers, who ridiculed the idea of missions to the heathen, and were as heedless of a gospel to the city poor, there was a greater gulf than between any of the Protestant Churches in our time. The moral apathy which fell upon the people in those dark years, the spiritual darkness and the worldliness of life which were seen in its teachers, and the open and unashamed corruption of men who still claimed the Church's services, are the indefeasible proof that Christ builds His Church only on this confession.

Here then we must take up our stand. Men may claim to be Christians, but unless they can say "Thou art the Christ," we must gently and sorrowfully deny their claims. One of the pro-

foundest thinkers and most tender spirits of our time, James Martineau, has made a resolute protest against being ruled out of the Christian Church. He was accustomed to affirm that he was a member of the Unitarian *Society*, but at the same time a member of the *Church* of Jesus Christ. He makes this pathetic appeal: "In Biblical interpretation I derive from Calvin and Whitby the help that fails me in Crell and Belsham. In devotional literature and religious thought I find nothing of ours that does not pale before Augustine, Tauler, and Pascal. And in the poetry of the Church, it is the Latin or German hymns, or the lines of Charles Wesley or of Keble, that fasten on my memory and heart, and make all else seem poor and cold. I cannot help this; I can only say I am sure it is no perversity, and I believe the preference is founded in reason and nature, and is already widely spread among us. A man's 'church' must be the home of whatever he most deeply loves, trusts, admires, and reveres—of whatever most divinely expresses the essential meaning of the Christian faith and life; and to be torn away from the great company I have named, and transferred to the ranks which command a far fainter allegiance, is an unnatural and, for me, an inadmissible fate.¹" It is not for us to judge Martineau's standing in

¹ Martineau, *Essays, Reviews, and Addresses*, vol. ii. pp. 375, 376. Cf. *The Seat of Authority in Religion*, book iv. chap. ii., for Martineau's view of the Person of Christ.

God's sight. Did these words, and some others in sympathy with them, stand alone, we might hail Martineau as a more resolved believer in the Deity of Christ than he dreamed. But in other and less emotional writings, he has distinctly taken his stand on the other side from "the great company" he claims as his spiritual kin. He was not willing to say, "Thou art the Christ," as Peter, and James, and John, and Paul, and Augustine, and Calvin, and Wesley, and Keble passionately affirmed it. Living in a Christian land, and drinking at the wells of Christian teaching, men may catch the Christian spirit, but Christ does not build His Church except on those men who will confess Him "Christ" and own Him "Lord."

IV. In the fourth place, it is clear that the Church is *a society with a victorious moral and spiritual energy.*

"The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This figure of the gates is one of the oldest and most familiar in Eastern life. At the gate of every city its elders sat in judgment and in council, as Lot sat in the gates of Sodom. From the gates of the city there issued forth its armies of conquest.¹ The gates of hell is a picturesque and Oriental metaphor of the counsel and craft and

¹ To this day the formal name of that Ottoman Empire which has intruded itself into our Western world, and holds its seat in Constantinople, is, in its French rendering, the Sublime Porte. It would be termed in simple English the Exalted Gate.

force of evil. By the figure Jesus conjured up to the imagination of His disciples that underworld of spiritual evil from which there issued forth the powers of darkness. From these gates of hell Jesus saw down the centuries of the history of His Church, in which all the wisdom of this world, its cunning and cruelty and foul passion, would assail His society of believing men. He foresaw the long struggle when

"Zion in her anguish
With Babylon must cope."

He foresaw those eras when the battle would seem to go against His Church. He saw His disciples before the Council. He saw His martyr saints witnessing with their lives when paganism sprung on them like a savage beast roused from its lair. He saw the subtler powers of darkness sapping the faith, corrupting the purities, and leavening the simplicities, of His people's worship and service. He saw the enemy sowing his tares among the wheat. But He saw His Church, in the power of its moral and spiritual energy, emerging from every conflict with a greater victory. He saw of the travail of His soul and was satisfied. He marked the ranks of the little company before Him grow in numbers, increase in knowledge, and rise to a nobler faith. He saw them pass on, sometimes with songs and sometimes with tears, until they became the great multitude which no man can number, who walk in

white, with palms in their hands, before the throne of God and the Lamb.

What a prophecy to make to a small band of obscure men holding a religious retreat in one of the glens of the Lebanons! Who can He be who makes this prophecy which has been so wondrously fulfilled, but the Christ, the Son of the living God? When shall it be still more wondrously realised? Surely when men are willing to lay aside, or at least count as unimportant, the minor distinctions which divide Christian believers, and be content to realise that Christ founded a society of men and women whose one mark and sign was that God had touched their hearts; whose central article of faith, with what it inevitably implies, is "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"; whose office and service for humanity is to be the stream of a victorious moral and spiritual energy. Then shall that union for which we hope and pray be at hand, and Christ's thoughts shall be attained.

"Gather us in,
Thou Love that fillest all!
Gather our rival faiths within Thy fold!
Rend each man's temple veil, and bid it fall,
That we may know that Thou hast been of old;
Gather us in!

Gather us in!
We worship only Thee;
In varied names we stretch a common hand;
In divers forms a common soul we see;
In many ships we seek one Spirit Land;
Gather us in!"

V

THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

“And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”—
MATT. xvi. 19.

THE meaning of certain great sayings of Jesus has suffered a long obscurity. The command to the rich young ruler, “Go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor,” was interpreted by the Mediæval Church as Christ’s requirement for all who would really live the Christian life. Under that conviction poverty was regarded as one of the supreme Christian graces, and Anthony of Coma went out to the solitude and privation of his hermit cell, leaving all his wealth behind. Now we realise that Jesus makes the same demand, in spirit but not in form, of every one who will be a disciple at all. Now we read Christ’s words more deeply to learn that there are other riches as perilous to the soul as great possessions. In a similar way that appealing word of Jesus, “Take My yoke upon you,” was read as a command to submit to a lot as humiliating as that of passing under the Roman yoke, or even as

torturing as the instrument of bondage which the Arab slave trader places on the necks of his captives after a raid. Now we know that Jesus meant that collar, finely fashioned, exactly fitted, and carefully finished, which a merciful master placed on the neck of his ox. It did not chafe or break the skin. Because the yoke was easy, the burden was light.

A darker cloud has long hung over this word of Christ about the keys of the kingdom. They have been interpreted so as to read that Peter was appointed the keeper of the gate of heaven. But the idea has been felt to be so ludicrous that many a witty jest has been associated with this office. They have been read more seriously, by those who claim to be the successors of Peter, as a warrant for their claim to be the keepers of the gates of Christ's fold on earth, and to bind and to loose the souls of men. Now the strange and mischievous confusion behind these misconceptions is this—that "the Church" is "the kingdom of heaven." But the kingdom of heaven, in the teaching of Jesus, is not the Church. Neither the keys of heaven above, nor of the Church below, if there be any keys of these at all, hang at any man's girdle. When we realise what Christ always meant by "the kingdom of heaven," and when we explore the figure of the power of its keys, we shall understand the simplicity and the vast significances of this promise of Christ.

I

Mark, to begin with, *the distinction between the Church and the kingdom*. Jesus kept this distinction clear. He speaks of "*My Church*," but always "*My Father's kingdom*." Once only, when compelled to it by Pilate's question, does He allow the kingdom to be called His own. The Church of Christ is a society brought into being by Him, founded on a confession of faith in Him, conscious of His presence to carry on His work. But the kingdom was before the Church, and is a larger and profounder and even more spiritual conception. The kingdom of heaven, or as it is more frequently called, the kingdom of God, is the realm and rule of God in heaven and on earth. What it may be in the eternal order when the end shall come, and Christ shall deliver it up to the Father, we do not know. We can know it only as it is here and now. "The kingdom of God," said Jesus, "is among you." In spite of all injustice and wrong and militant evil, the kingdom is among us. Within men, and within the various forms of social life, there are the seeds of an order—a realm and rule of God—which is freeing itself from hindrances, and will work itself out into a victorious dominion. Jesus gave us the simplest definition of it, where we might expect it, in prayer. He bids us pray, "Thy kingdom come." He adds His exposition of that petition in the words, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in

heaven." Paul discerned, with his inspired insight, what the kingdom is when he called it "Righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Jesus named it the kingdom of heaven because it is realised there. When God's will, in righteousness and peace and spiritual joy, is as omnipotent on earth as in heaven, the kingdom of God shall have fully come.

When this distinction between the Church and the kingdom has been lost, the meaning of this great saying is obscured. Whenever men regard the Church and the kingdom as one and the same thing, they lead themselves and others astray. Augustine, in his *De Civitate Dei*, clouded the mind of Christian men for many centuries by that error. The Romish Church maintains it, with all its worldly consequences, to this day. But the kingdom is greater, more transcendent, and more purely spiritual than the Church. The advent of the kingdom is to be seen in a new social order, in which the family, the city, the university, the State, the economic system, the fellowship of art, the republic of letters, and all the other energies of men shall be penetrated through with a sense of the service of God, until righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost shall be the modes and motives of their thought and action. The kingdom also includes the Church. The Church, like the family and the city and the university and the State and all the other organisations, exists for the kingdom. It has its own function. Its special,

inalienable office, its service toward the coming of the kingdom, which it dare not desert for any other more alluring business, is to secure this penetration of all the other elements of the kingdom with the religious spirit. Its function is to call upon all these other elements to view every problem, and question, and policy, and service, *sub specie aeternitatis*, i.e. *in the light of man's responsibility to God*. It is to that office and service Jesus appoints His Church when He said to Peter, representing its company of confessors, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven."

II

Mark, in the second place, *the power of the keys*. These disciples, in common with every Jew, knew in a flash what Jesus meant by this figure of the keys. They would have mocked, and indulged in their own quips of humour, had it been suggested that Peter was to sit beside the locked gate of God's great heaven. They knew that though the way into the sheepfold might be narrow, and its gate straight, its door was ever wide open and had no need of keys. The figure Jesus uses is that of a Jewish scribe whose symbols were always the keys. Had a Jewish artist painted a portrait of Hillel, or Shammai, or Gamaliel, he would have given him the keys in his hand. The Jewish scribe kept the treasury of knowledge. His keys were his powers of reading and understanding and applying the law of God. He was the expositor of

God's word, the interpreter of God's mind, the commentator on God's counsels, the teacher of the truth made known to him by God. He *bound* the things of God—His laws, His ideals of life and duty, His awful sanctions, His sacred and mystic revelation of Himself—upon men's hearts and consciences. He *loosed* men's minds and wills from any bondage, or any tyranny of unrighteous laws, and he kept their lives from indulging in things forbidden. What the Jewish scribe with the keys of knowledge and truth and duty was to the Jewish people, the Christian Church should be to the kingdom of God. It was not set apart to do the work of the kingdom. Its office was, and is, to teach men how they should serve God in His kingdom. Jesus most pertinently and significantly sets this whole truth at the close of His parables of the kingdom. "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasury things new and old." That describes both Christ's own office as the Master, and His disciples as His Church.

A glance along the history of the Church will bring in the conviction that this and this only is the meaning of the power of the keys, and is the function of the Church which Christ has founded among men. When Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost to bring forth "things new and old" out of Joel's prophecy that God will "pour out of His

Spirit upon all flesh," he is the scribe with the keys. When Peter and John stand before the Sanhedrin, and declare that they must obey God rather than man, they are exercising the power of the keys. When Stephen makes his noble apology, and sets the history of God's dealing with His people and method and purpose of it in a new light, he gives proof that there has been given unto him the keys of the kingdom of heaven. There was one young, hot-hearted Pharisee who heard Stephen, whom he both bound and loosed in that hour of impassioned exposition. Saul of Tarsus knew that for him it was Stephen, and not Peter, who had used the keys. When we pass in swift review and mark all the epochs of the Church, we find her teachers and ministers and humblest saints endowed with the keys. As often as she has made her protest against tyranny and social wrongs and needless sorrows, and as often as she expounds the truth as it is in Jesus to her generation, she proves herself the bearer of the keys. When the old, roughly-robed, bare-footed and bare-headed monk sprang into the arena between the bands of gladiators, and began to call upon the people to cease from shedding blood, men with eyes to see might have beheld him dowered with the keys. When Luther opened the long-closed Bible, and began to expound the message of Christ in the Gospels and Epistles, he was bringing forth out of his treasury things new and old. He was binding and loosing the consciences of men.

When Andrew Melville, in Scottish history, took King James by the sleeve as that pedant was arrogating to himself a spiritual power which was his neither by law nor by grace, and called him "God's silly vassal," reminding him that there were two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland, he may have been lacking in courtesy, but he was proving himself a scribe of the kingdom. When John Brown of Harper's Ferry stooped to kiss the negro child in its slave mother's arms as he passed to his death, men of vision might have seen the keys of the kingdom at his girdle. All men now realise that in his own rude way he taught the things of Christ to his own generation. Wherever and whenever the Christian Church, through its ministers and people and its inspired saints, shall stand to proclaim some high duty or to renounce some hoary wrong, they shall bind and they shall loose, and they shall fulfil the function of the Church in the kingdom of God.

Let me cite a modern instance which sets this truth simply and clearly, and yet in its noblest aspect. Over thirty years ago Scotland was overwhelmed by a great commercial disaster through the failure of one of its leading banks. It was a calamity that could not stand alone, and day after day the strongest business houses were compelled to suspend payment. The distress brought upon the shareholders, many of them widows and orphans brought in a single morning to poverty, was so great that a gigantic lottery of six millions sterling

was proposed. One half of these millions was to be given to subscribers. The other half was to be given to relieve the distress of those who were impoverished. The object seemed so praiseworthy, and the misery was so widespread and so extreme, that many of the wisest and clearest minds in Scotland gave it their support. Suddenly Principal Rainy, the foremost Christian minister of his land in his day, raised his voice. In a letter¹ full of invincible argument, couched in courteous and appealing terms, he protested against this appeal to the very passions and follies, the greed and the gambling, which had produced the ruin. The scheme was dropped in a day. He had bound and loosed the consciences of men. All Scotland understood, for one moment at least, the true meaning of the power of the keys.

How mechanical, how petty, how pitifully unspiritual is any other reading of this word of Christ! How grossly untrue to history is the claim of pope and of bishop, in virtue of their succession, that what they bind and what they loose has been bound and loosed in heaven. There are no wrongs, which have been imposed on the conscience and on the will, that have been more grievous to men's hearts, more corrupting to their trust in God, more antagonistic to the mind of Christ than many of those decrees and statutes, penances and indulgences ordained by men who have regarded themselves as

¹ Cf. *Life of Principal Rainy*, vol. i. pp. 301-303.

lords over God's heritage, and not simply as scribes expository and appealing. Only when the teachers and ministers and people are loyal to Him whose word is their counsel, and whose spirit is their guide, can they become the scribes with the keys. When they are possessed of that loyalty and endued by that spirit, whether they meet in council, or teach where two or three are gathered together, they bind and loose on earth, and God in heaven adds His sanction.

III

Mark, in the third place, *the office and function of the Church in the kingdom*. The old charge against the churchman, with which many men have still some sympathy, was his arrogance. That arrogance was seen, as it may be discerned to-day, in the ecclesiastics of the Romish Church in all the centuries. It may be observed in milder phases in those leaders of Protestant Churches who think it their duty to take part in the civic and political life of the day. Its source is a deeply lodged belief that the Church of Jesus Christ has a right and a duty of service within the spheres of other organisations. It forgets that the city and the State and the university and all the other elements of the kingdom are as divinely ordained to their work as the Church is to its office. "The powers that be," said Paul, "are ordained of God," and it must be remembered that he had in view a State which was pagan in its thought and despotic in its treatment of the Church

of Christ. The office and function of the Church is plainly to do the work Christ gave it to do and no other. Her first and ruling purpose should be to win men to Christ. She should regard as beyond her province whatever would imperil her fitness or her force for this primary duty. She should watch with a keen eye any introduction into her pulpit of economic or industrial or political questions. The minister in the pulpit represents the Church at prayer. Whatever personal liberty he may rightfully claim for himself, he must not desecrate so sacred an hour and waste so solemn an opportunity. In a single word, the office and function of the Church is to proclaim the truth as it is in Jesus and apply that to the hearts and consciences of men.

Earnest-minded men to-day are looking out on the mean streets of our cities and are feeling the shame of the wrongs of those who dwell in them. They regard with anxiety the peril both to the nation and to the State of these masses of ill-paid, underfed, overdriven, and discontented men and women. Their own passionate hearts burn within them at the inequalities in the distribution of wealth and the disparities in the enjoyment of comfort and leisure which are so glaring in our modern social life. It seems to them that the most clamant duty of the Church, and the function for which it has been ordained, is to redress these wrongs. They are calling upon our colleges to

drill their students in the social and economic problems of the day. They are insisting that Church courts shall interfere in questions of work and of wages. They are eager to declare that the preacher has the indefeasible duty of "redding the marches" between capital and labour. They forget that the Church's symbols are not the sword nor the statute-book, not even the spade and the trowel, not even the purse and the weapon of correction. Its symbols are the keys. If, and when, it wins men to Christ, and leads them into the light of His life and into the power of His grace, the beggar by the gate will not be unnoticed, the wrongs of the labourer will not remain unredressed, the injustices of the city and the State and the industrial order will not be allowed to prevail. "The business of the Church," says Stelzle, "is *to make men*." When the Church has made men in the image of Christ, every other element in the kingdom will have a Christian ideal of its duty, and a Christian will to perform it.

Never was the concentration of the Church upon its distinctive and supremely important work so much required as to-day. The other elements of the kingdom of God within the bounds of our own civilisation have been so largely Christianised that the Church is no longer compelled to aid in services which formerly were her inevitable duty. In new countries such as Africa the Church is still road-mender, bridge-builder, school teacher, nurse, and

physician, even banker and trader. Yet which of our missionaries does not long for the day when African Christendom can do these things for itself and leave them to the higher office of the scribes of the kingdom? It is upon that spiritual service that the Church requires to concentrate every gift and every inspiration.¹ Tolstoi has said that the mark of our time is a lost sense of God. It is clear enough that large masses of the people are no longer under the power of a world to come. It is sadly evident that worship and prayer are not felt to be necessities of the soul. Even within the Christian Church there is a strangely impoverished sense of sin, and a lessened conviction of the urgency and eternal value of salvation. Surely it is not the mind of Christ to care so much about the things of this life, to be so eager for the bread that perisheth, to become so eloquent on the need for larger houses and for leisure and more abounding pleasures, and yet to be less urgent that a man know God in Jesus Christ and walk in close communion with Him. These lesser blessings are not to be left out of account. All Christian men feel them to be the burden of their hearts and the problem of their thoughts. But this is the function on which the Church should concentrate itself—the proclamation of that kingdom of heaven of which it has been given the keys.

¹ Cf. *Gifts of Civilisation*, chaps. i., ii., iii., by Dean Church.

VI

THE DISCLOSURE OF THE CROSS

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.”—MATT. xvi. 21.

IN a paragraph of the *Autobiography of Mark Rutherford*, over which a reader is compelled to pause, he tells us of a lifelong desire and dream. This desire and dream was of a friend into whose ear he could tell the story of his hopes and fears, to whom he could disclose his deepest and his saddest thoughts. He watched with wistful eyes for some one who could understand him. He craved for a man who would give himself to him in an unfaltering devotion, in whom he could trust. To him he would unlock his heart. But Mark Rutherford, as he confesses, set his standard too high. The perfect friend never appeared. He kept his inner mind and his deeper cravings to himself, until melancholy and cynicism, only purged after long years, settled upon him.

Jesus also had His desire and dream. He looked out with wistful eyes to find men to whom He could

disclose His secret. But Christ never asked too much from men. He knew what was in man. He was content with those whose love and loyalty He had proved despite their flaws and frailties and the knowledge that sometimes they would fail Him. "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations," is His word of grateful praise. Here, in the solitude of the coasts of Cæsarea Philippi, when their faces are lit with the ardour of a deeper and larger faith and they are able to say in a brave confession, "Thou art the Christ," He unlocks His heart to them and discloses the long-kept secret of His death—"From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."

What gave such weight and dread to this disclosure which Jesus made to the disciples? What truth had been hidden from these men's eyes that made this disclosure a thing of surprise and pain to them? It was this—that Jesus was all His life on the way to Calvary. Students of the details of the Gospel story have made a minute and searching examination of the *Via Dolorosa*, and traced the steps of Jesus as He went up to His death. They have drawn up a table of the Stations of the Cross. They believe they can find fourteen different events which took place in the way from the Judgment Hall to Calvary. They count up

the places where some significant word was spoken, or some gracious deed was done. They mark Him coming forth wearing the crown of thorns. They see Him when the cross is laid upon His shoulders, when He begins to walk up the hard and stony street, when He stands to speak to the weeping women of the city. They mark the spot where Veronica, in the lovely legend, came out of her doorway to lend Jesus her handkerchief. They believe that they can tell where He fell under the weight of His burden, and the cross was laid on the strong shoulders of Simon of Cyrene, and so on, until the place which is called Calvary was reached. But there are more than fourteen Stations of the Cross. We do not believe that Jesus from His childhood saw, in any vision, what a death He would die. But from His boyhood He knew He must be about His Father's business, and even a child soon learns the cross there is in that, in a world like ours. When He walked in meditation on the hillside above Nazareth, when He was baptized, when He was tempted, when men would have made Him a king, when they went back and walked no more with Him, and in many unrecorded days right on to Gethsemane, He was on His way to Calvary. When He entered upon His active ministry and began to call men to faith in God, He also began to descry in growing clearness the outline of the cross etched against the background of the hate of His foes. Here, at Cæsarea Philippi,

when His three years of teaching are drawing to a close and He finds men ready to receive it, He makes His startling disclosure of the Cross.

Now let me use this situation, with all the foresight it implies and all the burden it reveals, to see Christ. Let us mark what this fact of the disclosure of His secret tells us about our Lord.

I. To begin with, it declares *the absorbing purpose of Christ*. The key to a man's character, and the interpretation of his life, is always to be found in his absorbing purpose. The reason why so many lives are aimless, and end in nothing worthy and little that is brave, is the want of an absorbing purpose. The people of the United States of America have been studying afresh the life of Abraham Lincoln. They have explored every nook and cranny of every home in which he lived. They have traced every story about him back to its source. They have searched the archives at Washington, and they have examined, as witnesses, those who worked with him in the public service. During his lifetime Lincoln suffered from detraction and slander. He was misunderstood, suspected, defamed. He died by assassination, and not every man mourned. Now all men see him to have lived a life of rare simplicity, straightforwardness, and honour. For it has been disclosed that his absorbing purpose was to save the Union. Compared with this even his intense loathing for slavery must

be held in check. Set against this, minor perils must be disregarded. Whatever else might be done or left undone, nothing interfered with this one ruling passion—to keep the States of America under one flag. When read in the light of his absorbing purpose, every word and deed falls into line.

We cannot understand the life of Jesus until we realise that His absorbing passion was to die for men. We cannot interpret aright a single deep word or deed, nor can we understand His journeys through Galilee and Samaria and Judea, nor can we find the reason of "the wonders left undone," until we understand the absorbing passion of His heart. I read, the other day, some expositions of Christ's social teaching by the Rev. R. J. Campbell of the City Temple. At first reading it seemed to be incredible that a man of Mr. Campbell's fine mind and sympathetic spirit should so misconstrue the message of Jesus. It was amazing to find that he ignores the larger events of the history and the master sentences of the record, and dwells so persistently on the fringes of Christ's teaching. But, as I read on, it was plain that Mr. Campbell conceived Jesus to be chiefly and absorbingly a social reformer. And, assuming that to be the absorbing purpose of Christ, his eyes had caught only what seemed to fit in with a social reformer's portrait. In no other wise can a man miss the whole trend and force of the four Gospels. A man will misunderstand them,

however intimately he knows their words, who does not see that Christ's secret was His Cross.

Looking broadly at the story and remembering this absorbing purpose, we understand many things that seem strange. Jesus admired the beauty of the buildings of the temple, yet He shows no interest in architecture or in art. He knew and felt the power and pathos of words, yet He ignores the literature of the day. Jesus saw the lilies of the field arrayed in a glory which Solomon did not wear, and He marked the sparrows as they flew. He was gladdened by the sights and sounds of a harvest field, and looked up into the heavens with the eye of a poet. Yet no passion for nature is expressed by Him. Jesus knew the fierce and turbulent currents in the political life of His time. He saw and felt the pitilessness of the Roman domination. He sympathised with the wrongs of the poor. Yet He kept Himself aloof; He spoke not one word of protest. His whole life can be explained only by this, that His one absorbing passion was the Cross.

II. In the second place, *this disclosure casts light on the working of the mind of Christ.* Long before Jesus opened His mind to the little band at Cæsarea Philippi, the purpose lay clearly before Him, however obscure some details must have been. There are minds which have a strange brooding power. When other men are strenuously busy in public life, these

brooding minds are pondering the causes, and the principles, and the issues of national polity, and they become the prophets of their people and the teachers of their generation. Jesus, like His mother, kept things in His heart. We cannot say that all was clear to Him from the first. He had to live by faith, even as we do. At the last, as we know, He shrank from His Cross with the thought that some other way might be possible for God. Yet we can see how His mind works on this question of His death, and how it reaches certainty and waits for the hour of disclosure.

I doubt not but that Jesus found His first clear intimation of His Cross in the Scriptures. He was the Messiah, and He knew that the Messiah was the suffering servant of the Lord. On the way to Emmaus He expounded those Scriptures to the two amazed and enraptured men, and the keynote of the exposition was that it behoved the Christ to suffer. When He read the prophet's description, "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." He saw His own face in the mirror of the word. Through all the waiting years in Nazareth that vision grew clearer and more certain. Not only in the pages of the Old Testament, but in the open book of the events of the day, Jesus read the same

sombre prophecy. He saw that the pathway of His feet led not to a rabbi's school, nor to a popular hero's leadership, nor to a throne, but to a sacrifice for His people. He knew that the only issue of one who would speak as He must speak, rebuke as He must rebuke, claim as He must claim, would be such an uprising of the hate and envy and pride of the authorities that they would hale Him to His death. Here, on this spur of the Lebanons, He looks out over the whole land, and He descries the forms of elders and chief priests and scribes conspiring in their hatred of Him, and He sees that the one death that a man can die in Jerusalem is the death of the cross.

III. In the third place, *this disclosure casts light on the gentleness of Christ's ways*. We wonder that Christ waits so long before more than an obscure hint of His death falls from His lips. So far as even the Gospel of John can guide us, only enigmatic sentences about the destruction of the temple of His body, and His being lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness, touch on the end of it all. We wonder that He speaks so darkly of His hour, His time, and His cup. One great reason is that He waited until men's minds were ripe for the whole message. Yet that does not tell us why He schooled Himself and hid His secret in His heart. Very plainly He would not shadow their hearts before the time. A father will often hide away some sad bit of family history

from his children. He will not mention a name which is never recalled within his own secret thought without a pang of sorrow. As the children speak to him in their artless confidences, they will often touch the tender spot unawares. Their questions will lead them almost to the door of the closet he keeps so jealously closed. Some of their words will call up the image of the day that he fears will come with sorrow for them all. But he will not needlessly anticipate that day. He will not quench the shining brightness of their eyes, or check the innocent laughter on their tongue. He will not shadow their young spirits by the story of a tragedy.

In like gentleness Jesus kept His secret as long as He could to Himself. He knew that His sun would go down while it was yet day. He knew that His life would be brief, and that He would walk to-day and the day after, and the third day He would be crucified. The burden of His knowledge kept His eyes waking and drove Him to the silence of the hills, as it afterwards made Him seek the solitude of the garden, that He might have His hand strengthened in God. But He would not appear unto men to fast. He made wine for their marriage feasts and drank of it Himself. He sat as a genial guest at men's tables until He was scoffed at as a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber. He played with their children, and not even their young, wise eyes guessed His sore, nor did their keen ears

hear His soft sigh. He walked among men with a constant calm. Even His disciples, on that last night before His death, saw that He was solicitous for their steadfastness and tender of their inheritance and their home, while the warrant for His death was being signed. He sat with Judas at the feast and sought to melt his heart, while His eyes were fixed on His crown of thorns. Only three times in simple and brief, but arresting, words does He trouble their spirits with His declaration of the Cross. Here, when they are able to bear it, and when it must be declared, He makes His first disclosure. This is the way of Christ. He will never give you a needless tear. He will never shadow your life without wise reason. He will not lay the cross upon your shoulders until it becomes your necessity. Only when the hour is at hand does He begin to show that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer.

IV. In the fourth place, *this disclosure of the Cross throws light on the supreme satisfaction of Christ.* We misunderstand not only the mind, but the heart, of Christ if we think that His attitude to His Cross was simply acquiescence or content. He had no joy in the sacrifice itself. He had nothing of that subtle pride which has strengthened the nerve of many a martyr for a bad cause, and been a solace to many a hermit in the midst of his privations. Jesus shrank both from yielding His full young life

up to death, and from all that the pain and anguish and desolation of the Cross would mean. It would be wrong to say that the prevision of His death at the hands of sinners and for sin was ever given Him without the experience of a chill upon His heart. In the midst of His most tranquil pleasures

“A vision rose before His eyes,
The cross, the waiting tomb,
The people’s rage, the darkened skies,
His unavoided doom.”

Yet we misunderstand Christ’s satisfaction in it if we forget the animation of His surrender, the elation of His spirit in suffering the will of God, and His joy in the anticipation of its issues. When Columbus set sail for the unexplored West, the people of Seville crowded down to see his little sloop weigh her anchor. They looked upon him with pitying eyes. They knew the months of exposure and peril, the fearful seas, the incessant toil and watchfulness, the scanty fare, the likelihood of mutiny to his command, the possibility that he would never see his home again. But Columbus knew that he would arrive. He walked his narrow poop with a proud elation. The purpose of his life, and the absorbing passion of his heart, were about to be accomplished. He knew that the cost was one which few would pay, yet he would reach the other side and walk its ocean beach. So Jesus went forward, with a song, to His Cross. “Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; there-

fore God has anointed Thee with the oil of joy above Thy fellows." It was that love for righteousness and that assurance that other men would be led into it which was the joy that was set before Him. As one who had reached the last stage of his journey and sees his goal in sight, Jesus disclosed His Cross with a deep satisfaction.

There are two lessons which the manner of this disclosure of the Cross impresses upon us. The first and simplest is that it is Christlike to keep our sorrow from needlessly shadowing the lives of others. Quite apart from the fact that to prate of one's misfortunes and griefs and struggles with adversity weakens and embitters ourselves, it must be remembered that it burdens other men's hearts. It is well to be reticent, equable, self-controlled. It is better to accept one's lot in silence and with a sweet resignation. It is best of all to greet the unseen with a cheer, and to be persuaded that though a cross outline itself before us, it is the will of God, and all is well.

The second lesson is that in the Christian life the meaning of the Cross may be hidden from us as it was to the disciples, but we shall come to a time when it shall be disclosed. Most of those who come to Christ in their youth are not drawn to Him by the story of His death. It is His life, His gentle ways, His wondrous words, His deep compassion, His perfect holiness which allure them. It is His appeal to their chivalry, and His call for

their service which wins their hearts. The theology of our early years is closely akin to the theology of Peter and James and John in those days when Jesus called them to follow Him. But there comes a time when Christ makes a disclosure of His Cross. Many a man has preached the gospel for years with acceptance and with power, to find the Cross suddenly stand up before him with its vast significance. When life grows dark and sorrows multiply, when unexpected evil and unlooked-for shame creep into our lives, when we realise the guilt of sin and its grip upon all men's hearts, we find that we need to know not only the Jesus who called little children like lambs to His fold, and not only the Christ who called to men by the seashore "Follow Me," but we need to see the Redeemer Who died and rose again. From that time Jesus begins to disclose His Cross.

VII

HEIGHTS AND DEPTHS

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona."—MATT. xvi. 17.

"Get thee behind Me, Satan."—MATT. xvi. 23.

THESE two sayings of Jesus, so full of intense feeling, may be looked at from different points of view. They may be considered in their relation to Christ and His work. Their emotion reveals that they touched the two dearest things in His life. One was an amen to His consciousness of Himself and His work; the other was a forbidding of His Cross. The first saying marks the moment when He first heard from human lips the confession He had long craved to hear. The second saying discloses Jesus facing again the besetting temptation of His life. Peter's protest, "Be it far from Thee, Lord," renewed the wrestling and the anguish of the wilderness of temptation. Then it was the voice of an enemy which suggested His refusal of the way of sorrow. Now the temptation came through the accents of a friend. He saw Satan transfigured into an angel of light. He turned upon Peter with a cry of pain and moral protest, "Get

thee behind Me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."

But these two sayings may be looked at in regard to Peter and his spiritual state. We find with a shock of surprise that the man who is exalted to heaven in one saying is cast down to hell in another. We think it strange that one, who has been pronounced to be the first and foremost believer in Christ, should fall so low in so brief an interval of time as to be a tempter of the holy. Christ's keen feeling shows us that He realised the peril of Peter's soul. He is as swift in His spiritual surgery as a wise physician is in a moment of life or death. Christ's two sayings, with their deep feeling, reveal this forgotten truth that for the best of us there are heights of heaven and there are depths of hell.

I. Mark, to begin with, *There are heights of heaven to which the soul may rise, and depths of hell to which it may descend.* We hear and have always heard, in Christian teaching, solemn sayings affirming the depravity of the human heart. We cannot keep that truth too clearly in mind. The doctrine of the depraved heart does not declare that men are wholly evil. It means that no part of a man's nature is free from the taint of sin. It traces that truth back to the deeper and subtler fact that the whole human race is depraved, and that there is a

fount of evil within every man. You and I know that if we know ourselves at all. You and I know that corruption wells up within us, to our shame, mingling with our best desires. We know how vain thoughts lodge within us, forswear them as we will. We know that envy and jealousy and pride and sloth and ill-temper, and all the brood of venomous iniquities and even the darker and more ungodly passions, find room and indwelling in our hearts. The cleansing of that fount of evil is the first step toward the life of peace and purity. In that hour when you drew your first breath of the new life in Christ you sincerely believed that all things had become new with you. Again and again you have thought, in older years, that some folly and frailty and wicked desire would never stand even upon the threshold of your life. Again and again you have said that you had mastered some odious temptation whose very name you loathed. Yet that very night, as you went to your rest, you could hardly pretend to pray. You had fallen again, at the same place, in the same weakness and wilfulness. The man who does not know that about himself does not know himself at all. But do we think often enough and gladly enough of the other possibility which the Christian faith proclaims as clearly and unhesitatingly? Do we often enough say to ourselves that we are made in God's image, that we are called to be saints, and that we shall be conformed to the likeness of His dear Son? If we

realised sufficiently that we shall become like Him, our spiritual battle would be not merely to keep ourselves out of the fearful pit and the miry clay, but to follow the upward calling which ends before the throne. To all of us there is no doubt but that Christ has spoken some echo of His words to Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," as we have turned our faces hellwards. Yet to all of us He is still more eager to say, "Blessed art thou." Every man should keep in mind the infinite possibilities of the soul.

II. Mark, again, *That the heights of heaven and the depths of hell lie close beside each other.* We wonder that Peter, after such an hour of spiritual elevation and amid such surroundings, when so withdrawn from the arena of common temptation, should so suddenly fall. But in the scenery of the soul yawning precipices lie on either side of the upward path. There is a way to hell, in Bunyan's classic saying, from the gate of heaven. The lips which have been opened in a sincere rapture of praise may also be opened, before an hour has passed away, for foul jest and envious slander. The heart which has been the home of holy thoughts may be the haunt of evil imaginations before the face has lost the sheen of the blessedness within. Abraham, the man who went out in sublime faith and lived through his years in a true gentlehood and a noble courage, plays the coward in Egypt and imperils the honour of his dearest. Jacob, whose thirst for

God's blessing persists through his dreams, can cheat and cozen after he has made his solemn vows. Hazeal, the brave and single-minded soldier, can ask with a genuine indignation, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" and yet blazing villages and murdered men disclose how far he can fall. Our greater dramatists do not hesitate to show us their characters passing with a swift leap from the path of virtue to the steep descent of basest sin. A man may awake in the morning with a psalm, and before the sun has set make his bed in hell. A man may sit at a communion table with its calm brooding over his heart, and yet may ashame the faces of all who love him with his unkind words and sullen temper before an hour has passed away. Moses comes down from the mount after his forty days' communing with God, and breaks the tables of stone in his unholy anger. David cherishes in his heart the thought of building a temple for God, and yet he makes every man in Jerusalem ashamed of him for his sin. Elijah fearlessly faces Ahab and Jezebel and the prophets of Baal, and yet, when the evening has come, he is fleeing in fear to Horeb. A minister knows well that there is no hour so perilous for him as that of the Sabbath evening, after a day when his mind and heart have been glowing with thoughts of Christ. We sometimes call this the peril of reaction. If it were only reaction, it would be less to be feared. It is the sadder truth that the heights of heaven and the depths of hell lie close

beside each other, and we are too easily tempted to pass to the pleasures of sin.

III. Mark, again, *That every man is either climbing to the heights of heaven or he is descending into the depths of hell.* Whether we think it or not, we are all passing under the divine law of evolution upwards or downwards. We may all either rise up to the stature of an angel, or fall to a lower level than the beast. But we must say more, we must realise that one of these two we are actually becoming. As surely as a flowing tide swells to its flood, or the first flush of dawn becomes full noontide, and as surely as the leper's spot creeps over the leper's flesh, or the touch of rottenness in the fruit passes on to putrefaction, so surely shall we attain the heights or the depths. Mark, it is not a single slip, not one dreadful and bewildering fall, not one cowardly and shameful denial, which marks the course of a man's life and the destiny of his soul. In some moment of maddening temptation, or some hour of intolerable strain, or on some day when mind and heart are in a whirl, a man may plunge into a sin whose shame will never leave his face. On the other hand, a man, under some impulse, may rise to an amazing height of sacrifice and do a deed of singular and attractive beauty. But neither of these are typical of the man nor indicative of his actual state. David's sin did not declare the real bias of his soul, or show which way his face was set.

It was a sudden step aside. Saul's penitent tears, when David reproached him, did not reveal the deep and unchecked trend of his will. Nothing is more common than for unthoughtful minds to regard some single deed of heroism, or some impulsive action of generosity, as a sign that a life is rising to higher things, when all the while the man's steps are taking hold on hell. John Hay writes the ballad of Jim Bludso, the Mississippi engineer, whose life would have evoked the grief and the pity of Christ, and he selects the stubborn loyalties and fearless braveries of his life as showing more clearly what Jim Bludso was than the course of careless self-indulgence which made up his common day. The poet tells us of Jim Bludso's splendid chivalry when the *Prairie Belle* caught fire. Jim Bludso ran her against the river bank, and stood by his post, and lost his life. Hay writes as he closes the ballad—

“He weren't no saint,—but at jedgment,
I'd run my chance with Jim,
'Longside of some pious gentlemen
That wouldn't shook hands with him:
He seen his duty, a dead-sure thing,—
And went for it thar and then;
And Christ ain't going to be too hard
On a man that died for men.”

It is not well to express or even to form any opinion about any man's state before God or any man's lot in the judgment. But nothing can be worse than to obliterate moral distinctions which

are plain enough to every man's eyes. Nothing can be worse than to commend or excuse a course of life which every honest man and every pure woman knows to be the outflow of an ungoverned self-indulgence. Nothing can be more misleading than to teach that a bravo's impulsive deed is any indication of the essence of his mind and character, any more than a high nature's single and sorrowful fall reveals his true spirit. The one man is climbing the heights of heaven. The other man is descending to the depths of hell.

There are few truths more neglected than this unconscious ascent and descent. It is the most popular fallacy in moral thinking that men can remain unchanged through a long course of time. There are to be found in our conservatories little stunted trees which the patient skill of Japanese gardeners have kept alive for over a hundred years. They have neither grown nor shrunk. They show the same number of branches. They nourish the same spread of leaves. They are not beautiful, but their life persists. Vast numbers of men and women think that in the same way their moral and spiritual life can stand still. But what can be done with a plant in the natural world cannot be done with a soul in the higher and more sensitive spiritual world. There may be no grave outward sign. There may be no moral disaster, although every now and again some man discovers, to his own dismay and the shame of those who love him,

how far he has drifted from his nobler ideals. But with most men life may go on as decently as before, and only watchful and prophetic eyes may discern the changes, and only the final judgment will disclose the result. In the same way the man who is climbing the heights, and fighting a stern battle with a quick hot nature, amidst tempting circumstances, may half lose heart because he finds himself making so little of it. But surely and unconsciously he is being transformed by the renewal of his mind. The issue of it will be seen in the increasing steadfastness of his life, and the deepening beauty of his character. This truth is set for us in two striking instances: "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him." "And Samson wist not that the Lord was departed from him." If men realised this truth salvation would become significant and urgent.

IV. Mark, again, *That every man is climbing the heights or descending to the depths as he accepts or refuses the Cross.* We cannot always be sure about ourselves that we are in Christ. Assurance ought to be a grace in every Christian heart. But there are some who all their lifetime are subject to bondage. Mr. Fearing went all the way of the pilgrimage, and across the river into the city, and yet his steps trembled to the end. But there is one test which is simple and open and clear. It is this test of accepting the Cross. Here Peter

stumbled, and at this point he might have turned fatally aside. He savoured of the things that be of men, when, in his heart, he chose the soft and easy way. This is a universal truth of all religion. It is the cardinal law of that religion to which, as Dr. Johnson said, every good man belongs. The one test in the final judgment of all men and women, whether they have ever heard Christ's name or not, or whether they have been taught only the barest rudiments of His message, or whether, like Peter, they have seen His Deity and named Him Christ, will be their acceptance or refusal of the Cross. Right in the path of all men stands the Cross in some form. Some poverty which narrows and limits life; some duty of forbearance or forgiveness which searches the heart; some pain of body or mortification of spirit; or some denied joy in life, some lot which has neither honour nor solace, must be accepted or refused. As we accept we climb the heights. As we refuse we descend to the depths.

For what does it mean when we accept or when we refuse the Cross? What does it mean for a man to say to his cross, "This be far from me." What did Christ's Cross stand for to Himself and to all men? It stood for the highest and noblest good, for the extinction of self-will and self-indulgence, for righteousness and truth at all cost and hazard, for the redeeming of the lost and cast away, for the redressing of all wrongs, for the

uplifting and ennobling of men. Whenever a man accepts a lot, or a circumstance, or a course of life, which enshrines such costly nobilities as these, he is accepting his cross. What issue can there be of such an acceptance but the purging and purifying and ennobling of his life and character? What issue can there be of his refusing this cross but his demeaning and degradation?

These sobering certainties of human experience bring us face to face with the two most imperative demands of Christ. The first of these is the demand for *a divine renewal of the soul*. This necessity for a decisive and conscious change of the whole nature, down to the deepest source of the will, is the first article of universal religion. Sakya Muni has his hour of absolute surrender to his call. Mahomet has his day of seclusion, from which he comes forth changed in every fibre of his being. Every faith insists upon that experience in which the soul finds a great light shining round about it, hears the call of an inward voice, which is sometimes resonant upon the outer ear, and passes through an experience which changes the purpose of the life. The reason of this demand and this necessity is, that this delicate and sensitive and most subtly affected nature, which we call the soul, can never escape the depths and never climb the heights until the face has been set, in a definite decision, and under a new power, toward things high and holy. That demand Jesus made in forms

as various as were the men and their temperaments and circumstances to whom He spoke. "Ye must be born again." "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God." "Go, sell all that thou hast and follow Me." "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." That experience may often be one of which a wise and sensitive heart will be reticent. It may be one of which a humble and diffident spirit may speak only in troubled words. But as surely as there is no stream without its source, and no flower without its root, so surely there is no life which is climbing the heights which has not its source and root in the divine renewal of the soul.

The second is the demand for *a vigilant watchfulness over the life*. The New Testament is a book of songs rather than of tears. It is full of men and women with shining faces and exulting hearts. It abounds in the great and passionate words of joy. Its saints live and move in a noble liberty. Yet a vigilant watchfulness is its constant note of appeal, and has become the habit of all its braver lives. To them life is a watch even past the midnight. It is a race to be run along a narrow track. It is a wrestling with an antagonist. It is a struggle with the principalities and powers of evil. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take

heed lest he fall." The call to prayer, and to dependence upon God, and to the guarding of all the avenues of temptation, rings out of every page. The one spiritual history, whose inward experience has been freely revealed, reaches its climax in the words of an unfaltering spirit who is more than glad that the race and wrestling are over. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Every man knows well that no otherwise can he climb the heights. Every man knows well, that when he has turned aside to those sins, whose shame he sometimes feels he can never forget, he has fallen because he has ceased his vigilant watchfulness. There is no felicity that a man can have which is sweeter than the knowledge that his life has been an upward calling all the way, from the hour when he accepted the forgiving mercy of God.

VIII

THE LAW OF SELF-DENIAL

“And He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”—
LUKE ix. 23.

I HAVE seen the face of a high-souled and sensitive teacher colour with the deep flush of a young girl in her moment of keen feeling when he was compelled to censure a slothful student. The face of Christ was flushed with pain when He uttered His words of rebuke to Peter, “Get thee behind Me, Satan.” Jesus did not love to utter reproach. His usual method of rebuke was by a silent look. For that reason He turns at once from the ashamed man and begins to speak to them all. He will no longer emphasise his fault. And He is well aware that the mind which was in Peter was in all his fellow-disciples, and would require to be purged out of every man who would come after Him. He lays down that law of self-denial which is the primary law of the Cross.

The Christian life presents itself in a full-orbed teaching under two contrasting aspects. In one

aspect it is a life of liberty in Christ. It is the coming into full and lovely flower of the whole nature of man. Its key-word is not repression, but expression. Its method is culture, not restraint. Christ has come to give us life, "life more abundantly." It is a call to walk in the Spirit, and to live in that kingdom whose delights are righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Augustine states this truth in his great saying, "The Christian law is to love, and to do as you please." But in the other aspect it presents itself not as a liberty but as a captivity, not as a self-abandonment but as a self-control, not as an easy yoke but as a stern and ceaseless struggle. This contrast is to be found on every page of the New Testament. It is set down clearly in Christ's teaching, and it is illuminated by His life.

A scrutiny of our own experience will lead us to see that both of these aspects blend into one. It is not the contrast between the Greek and the Hebrew ideals of conduct as they struggle in bewildered minds. It is not the opposition between the ascetic and Puritan view of duty and that of a more gracious and more generous outlook on life. It is the universal Christian experience. This law of self-denial is laid upon us in the first step we take when we begin to follow Christ. To a young believer Christ's words come as the call to enter a strait gate and to walk in a narrow way. His command is to leave all, rise up, and follow Him.

Many of His words are stern with rigorous forbidding to the eager disciple. All through life demand after demand is made upon him, and all of these mortify and sometimes crucify the self within him. But as he yields himself in a loving obedience he finds that Christ's commandments are not grievous. He realises that what was imposed on him as a restraint becomes the easy habit of his life and the felicity of his soul. He learns that God works in him, both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and the only hours of vexing grief are those in which God's pleasure is not his own. Like Paul, he writes himself down, in moods of rapture, "the bond-slave of Jesus Christ," and he finds Christ's service to be perfect freedom. Nevertheless, so long as we are what we are, even when we have been born again of God's Spirit, so long as we are tainted and tintured with sin, tempted through our senses, living in a world of sorrow and fear and pain, we shall find that self-control is an hourly necessity. So long as we are in the body, and we must mingle with men and women whose faces ensnare us, whose words provoke us, whose conduct so often vexes and humbles us, we shall find that the law of self-denial remains the law of all those who are coming after Christ. Our peace is found in accepting it. Our liberty is gained when we find the yoke so easy that the burden is light.

Let me make this law clear by considering two points. Look, in the first place, at the spheres of

the law of self-denial; and, in the second place, at the penalty of its refusal.

I. In the first place: *the spheres of the law of self-denial.*

We must, to begin with, deny ourselves in the sphere of our *natural appetites*. There are appetites which are God-given, and, when wisely indulged, are God-blessed. We have the natural hunger for our daily food, a healthful longing for pleasant sights and sweet sounds, and all that ministers to our delight, a craving for rest when we are weary, and for recreation when we are jaded, and a longing for the satisfactions of the mind and the heart. As we grow older we thirst for recognition and influence and reward. From youth to age we crave to love and to be loved in return. These are all natural and innocent appetites, but every one of them must be controlled if our life is to be Christlike. Hunger may become gluttony, and there are more dainty gluttons on the Church's roll than some people think. A love of things beautiful may become a sensuous and despiritualising delight. The craving for recognition and influence has unconsciously too often become a merciless ambition. The sublime passion of love may coarsen into a selfish and even sensual indulgence. We must keep the curb at times on them all. We must keep our body under. We must watch even the fine outflow of our affections lest they engross our minds, or find unworthy direc-

tion. There may be circumstances in which we shall be compelled to deny ourselves their innocent gratification. A man may hold himself at liberty to drink wine. He may think that the joy of life is limited by its absence. Yet he will drink no wine while the world standeth lest he make his brother to offend. A man may know himself entitled to the joy of a home ; yet, for reasons he does not care to advertise, he will deny himself marriage. A man may be living amidst surroundings which call for a protest, and therefore he may be compelled to stint himself of much he would enjoy to make his protest clear. There are certain temperaments which are constantly on the brink of daring and desecrating sin. Men who are endowed with these temperaments know that they must keep a sleepless vigilance over their thoughts, exercise a stern control over their eyes, and jealously guard every step of their feet. All men, even the simplest and most unspotted, find this law pressing upon them in the sphere of their natural appetite, but these strong and insurgent spirits find it to be the imperative law of life. Yet all must join hand in hand in this, that this law must be obeyed if a man will come after Christ.

The law operates with a sterner rigour in the subtler sphere of *duty*. The demand of duty may not fall upon our ears with so sharp a tone as the call to school our appetites, but it persists through all the hours, and exacts a more trying obedience. We are all tempted by the monotony and drudgery

and routine of a dutiful life. We find it difficult to accept the disagreeable. It is hard for flesh and blood to be always loyal to the exacting details of life with sweetness and cheerfulness. Many men are disloyal to the simple duties of home, and the wise restraints of social intercourse, and the exacting of their business life, simply because they will not deny themselves. To rise in the morning at the appointed time; to be punctual and regular in our engagements; to be unremitting in our diligence, and as faithful behind a master's back as before his face; to do one's best through all the hours of the day up to the full limit of our strength,—are rare achievements. Yet if we fail in these we are not coming after Christ. There are more difficult duties which suffer a more serious disobedience. To be courteous to the rude, helpful to the selfish, gentle to the insolent, quiet and self-possessed to the scornful and sarcastic, and patient with the erring, how few rise to these heights of self-abnegation! There is a word about Christ in Paul's Epistle to the Romans which often haunts my ear, "Even Christ pleased not Himself." In what particular was Christ's self-denial, so easy to Him, put to the strain? Paul appends his word of exposition, "The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me." It was the fulfilment of this duty that lay upon His life—the bearing of undeserved scorn, the sharing of the shame of others, the making common cause with the outcast and the lost that smote so keenly on Christ's

heart. No man's feet are found in the way of Christ who does not every morning set his face to duties which strain body and mind and spirit.

A third sphere in which this law must be obeyed is the sphere of *service*. By service I mean that giving of time and strength to the State, or the city, or the Church, or to any other organisation which is striving to bring in the kingdom of God. A man's duty lies upon him with an obligation of which he is often reminded. But a man's service is undertaken only at the call of Christ speaking to his heart and conscience. Service draws upon a man's leisure, and lays its limiting burden on a man's strength and freedom. Service is a continuous self-denial. Young hearts present themselves for the service of Christ in an hour of chivalrous devotion, but they do not walk far on in the way until they find the pressure of this law. Their Christian service demands not only their hours of pleasure and of ease, but their time of rest. It taxes their slender purses, takes a heavy toll of their strength, and demands their patience with their fellow-workers, their love to those they serve, and their courage in many a disheartening hour. As life goes on they begin to find themselves robbed of much which all men count dear. Here is a man who revels in art and music. Here is another who finds his solace and delight in literature. Here is a third who has realised the liberal education to be gained by

mastering a period in history. What a joy many men would find in evenings spent in a study of the records of the past, or in enlarging their minds by the reading of the wise and mellow essayists, or in drinking of the well of English undefiled in the company of a great poet! But if a man is to serve his Church, or to take his share in the civic life of a community, or to fulfil his responsibility to the State, he must deny himself all these enriching delights. If a man is to help in the costly work of those societies and agencies which sweeten the lives and brighten the homes of the poor, he must give up much that makes his neighbour a more widely read and more thoughtful man than himself. I have seen a shadow fall upon the face of a man who was worn by nights of service he had given to Christ, when some other, who had sat beside his evening fire, was pouring forth the treasures of a full mind to the delight of all who heard him. He felt a keen pang as he realised his impoverishment. But there were many to whom that shadowed man was dear, to whom his very name was music, and I doubt not but that He, whom he had come after, had given him other rewards of his obedience to the law of self-denial. In the great day when the secrets of all hearts are revealed, he may be amazed to find how rich he is in the treasures laid up in heaven. Yet the cost is great.

This law of self-denial rises above the sphere

of the affection, and of duty, and of service, up to the sublime sphere of the *Cross*. That is the meaning of Christ's added word, "Let a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily." The taking up of the cross is not a law of the life as self-denial is. It is the consummation of that law in a special sphere. It is the taking up of what you could refuse if you had the will, and in all likelihood would receive the world's applause for refusing. I do not know what your cross is. Sometimes I am hardly sure of my own. This is certain, that in a Christian life it must be taken up every day. You know what is the peculiar and undeserved burden and hardship of your life, which you are every day tempted to escape. You know what crucifies your flesh, and compels you to give up the hopes and purposes which form your dreams. You know the narrow and limited and humbling lot you are accepting. You could refuse the burden if you willed. You could fling out of the narrow way. You could cut the thongs that bind you. But were you to mutiny against this law in the sphere of the Cross you would find no marks of Christ's footprints on the way.

II. In the second place: *the penalty of its refusal*. "If any man will come after Me," said Jesus, laying down the penalty of the refusal of this law. We may think that we are following in His footprints. We may call ourselves by His name. We may

be busy with the exposition of His thoughts. We may preach His Gospel. We may be melted to tears by our visions of His grace. But if we will not deny ourselves in all the spheres, up to the sphere of the Cross, we are not to be found in the company that follow Christ. We do not come after Him.

There are in the Gospels three instances which set this truth in a clear light. These three instances, I believe, tell us the three ways in which men are disobedient. The first instance is that of the men who walked no more with Him when they heard His high and austere teaching. They had followed Him when popular favour shone upon Him. They had eaten of the bread that He had made. They had a high hope that He was the King of Israel, and they were ready to follow Him in a struggle for the throne. They had felt the power of the teacher of the beatitudes, and knew the spell of His holiness. But when He led them up to the heights of sacrifice, and insisted that they must eat His flesh and drink His blood, and live out the round of their days after His example, they were brought to a pause. "They went back and walked no more with Him." *Jesus let them go.* He let them go because they would not accept and obey those "hard sayings" which enshrine the law of self-denial. To this day there are men and women who claim Christ's name, are eager to see Him become the King,

and can descant on the depths of His words and the unearthly glory of His life, but they will not accept His "hard sayings," and Christ does not see them in the ranks of those who follow.

The second instance in the Gospel is that of the rich young ruler. We all know the oft-told story. We can see the young, eager, high-minded man running to Jesus, falling down before Him in a deep admiration, proffering Him his devotion, and believing himself to be sincerely intent on spiritual perfection. But when Christ's demand came, "Go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor," he went away sorrowful. Jesus loved him, and yet *He let him go*. He made no effort to restrain him. The whole interview did not last five minutes, but Christ can search and expose a human soul in much less than five minutes. Christ laid upon him in this demand the law of self-denial. It met this ardent young spirit in the form which tried him most severely, and exposed the latent disloyalty of his soul. He was searched not only in the sphere of his natural appetites, or of his duty, or of service. In those spheres this young man's chivalry might have achieved obedience. What searched him was his call to an act of denial which meant his taking up the cross. There again is where so many fail. Their lives are not wanting in wise restraints, and not lacking in the fulfilment of daily duties, and not marked by the absence of Christian

service. But there is one demand they will not hear, and one sacrifice they will not make. Jesus sees them going aside out of the ranks of the men with the shining faces who carry the cross.

The third instance in the Gospels is the most tragic of all. It is the case of Judas Iscariot. He had gone far with Christ. At one time Jesus thought that he might have learned the secret of the Lord. He had already observed the law of self-denial. In the sphere of the affections, in the sphere of duty, and in the sphere of service, Judas had come after Christ. No man made higher sacrifices than he when he left all to follow Jesus. But this last sphere of the law of self-denial was too high for him. It was the foresight of the cross which shook his heart. It was the shadow of the cross which daunted him. It was the sight of the cross from which he fled. "Judas went out, and it was night." He went out, and *Jesus let him go*. So Christ will let every man go, even although he rises from a communion-table, who will not deny himself and take up his cross.

Do men realise that if they are not denying themselves, and taking up their cross, and following Him with the fidelity which may be discharged only in death, they are not really of His company? In a hymn charged with spiritual passion, Dr. George Matheson, of Edinburgh, has written—

"Oh love that will not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee."

He has set in his moving music Paul's conclusion to his exultant chapter of religious experience, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." But these words are in place only on Christian lips. They can be sung only by men who have denied themselves and are taking up the cross. They can be assured that, however tempted and however cast down, they shall never perish, and no man shall pluck them out of Christ's hand. Too often they are sung by men with the secret thought that, however indulgent may be their lives, however they refuse to take up their cross, however impenitent they remain, Christ is love that will not let them go. The sombre truth is set down here that the man who will not deny himself imposes upon himself an awful penalty. Consciously or unconsciously he goes back and walks no more with Christ, and *Christ lets him go*. He will be among the men who find the great surprise on the day of judgment of standing on the left hand, and hearing the condemning word of Christ.

"Follow Me," said Jesus, as He closes His statement of the law with a word of appeal. In no other way can men fulfil this law to the end. Sometimes a brave heart will begin its fulfilment in a mood of chivalry. Sometimes a still braver spirit will

continue it under the impulse of a passion for truth and righteousness, and under the spell of a noble life. But all such motives fail in the hour of strain. Some more searching test, some desolating sorrow, some crushing burden falls on the life, and the way is found to be too strait. In the life of George John Romanes this truth has been tenderly expounded. A singularly noble nature, an exquisitely pure spirit, an unusually clear and agile intellect, and a deep fount of tender affection, it seemed natural to him to deny himself. But the years of strain came, and life became almost intolerable through pain. He hesitated in silence at his cross. Then he was led to lift his eyes to see one who had gone before him, and was calling upon him to follow. He read one morning his wife's favourite 27th Psalm, and one verse came as the message of God, "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face ; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." He took up his cross with a new animation and a new courage, and poured out his humble trust in an impassioned sonnet. In its closing lines he reveals the power of the call to follow Christ—

"I ask not for Thy love ; nor e'en so much
As for a hope on Thy dear breast to lie ;
But be Thou still my Shepherd—still with such
Compassion as may melt to such a cry ;
That so I hear Thy feet, and feel Thy touch,
And dimly see Thy face ere yet I die."

The man for whom Christ is Shepherd denies himself, and carries his cross to the end.

IX

LOSING AND FINDING

“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.”—MATT. xvi. 25.

WHEN Jesus saw how His demand, that men should deny themselves and take up the cross and follow Him, made His disciples quail, He added three warnings. He declared that whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for His sake shall find it. He passed on to an even more solemn warning when He asked, what it would profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? And He called in the most solemn and heart-shaking warning of all as He summoned up to their minds the scene of the judgment, when every man shall be rewarded according to his works, and proclaimed the fate of the men who have been ashamed of Him and His way of the Cross.

Let us look at the first of these warnings to-day. Jesus sets it in the paradox, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.” A paradox is a saying which seems to be a contradiction in terms,

a statement with two members, both of which cannot be true. A paradox is chosen partly because of its power to startle the mind into attention and provoke it to deeper thought, partly because it is so easily remembered, and partly because only by a paradox can some of the deeper truths of life be concisely expressed. On the face of it nothing can be more contradictory than to say that to save one's life is to lose it, and to lose one's life is to find it. Sometimes this paradox is explained by declaring that Jesus had two different kinds of life in view. We are told that Jesus meant us to sacrifice a lower life for a higher, an earthly and a temporal life for a spiritual and an eternal, the life of the body for the life of the soul. We are taken, for the noblest instance and proof of this interpretation, to the Roman amphitheatre. We are shown the martyrs awaiting the onrush of the lions. As they are set upon by the hungry and merciless beasts, and as the mangled remains of their bodies are carried away, we are told to see in their tragic loss their splendid gain. They have lost their lives for Christ's sake, but they have found the life eternal. But the martyrs' loss and gain touches the fringe, but only the fringe, of Christ's truth. Jesus has enshrined a deeper meaning in His paradox. He is stating a law of universal life. He does not mean two different kinds of life, a lower and a higher, set in contrast. He is thinking of the same life in each case. He is stating the

still unaccepted and, for many men, incredible truth, that to be eager to save life is the way to lose it, and that the way to find it is to be willing to lose it, and, if need be, to pour it out in a splendid waste.

Let me illustrate this law of losing and finding life in its chief spheres. As we see the truth of Christ's deep saying we shall bow down our hearts and wills in a glad obedience.

I. Think of it, in the first place, in *the sphere of physical life*. All men, even the simplest-minded and most ignorant, realise in some dim way that the worst thing you can do for the life of the body is to be too careful of it. Here, for example, is a man who keeps the most anxious and most earnest watch over his physical well-being. He shuts himself up from the cold. He keeps himself covered from sun and wind. He goes swathed in mufflers. He lives in a tormenting fear of draughts. When the winter is upon us he is off, if his means permit, to the Riviera or to Egypt. If he be a poor man, he does not venture out of his cosy room at night. He will take no service which will call upon him to face a chance evening of storm, but will hap himself up before a toasting fire. His watchful desire is to save his life. What happens? He becomes a poor, pallid, feeble creature. His sallow skin, his chill hands and feet, his liability to infection, his watery eyes and his impoverished blood, are the proofs that he has lost the life he was so eager to

save. I am not thinking of those invalids, broken and maimed in the battle of life, or of those brave and patient men and women who, through all their years, have borne the burden and suffered the pain of physical weakness, or nervous infirmity, or disabling and torturing and incurable disease. Let our compassion go out to them. It is one of their added trials that they cannot even attempt the chivalrous services, and enter into the costly toils of stronger and more healthful frames. I am thinking of that increasing number of men and women, to whom in these days when a coddling comfort is so common, the health and well-being of their body is their first concern. Let these valetudinarians think less about their pulse and their temperature. Let them brave the winter cold at the call of duty with a high and fearless heart. Let them spend their energies in services which strain every muscle of their body, and makes their blood rush and leap in their veins. Let them give themselves generously to costly toils. They will be cold when the winter snows whiten the hills. They will be hot as they serve in some crowded and often unwholesome atmosphere. They will come to their rest spent and weary. But they will find that they have forgotten themselves and their bodies, and that their blood will be pulsing rich and warm in their veins. They will discover that their frames will be knit together as by a course of exercise, and the colour of their skin will be the index of the healthful joy within. They have, as

some would think, lost their lives. They know that they have found them.

Let me as I pass illustrate this law of the physical life in two large and broad instances. The sturdy northerner in Europe wrests his living out of his cold and stubborn fields. He lives out his years under grey skies, and faces storm and tempest all the winter through. He knows nothing of the soft winds and continuous sunshine in which southern lands are bathed. But the northerner becomes a man of virile and sinewy strength, and he mocks at the languid and inert southerner who sleeps in the shadow of his vines and lounges through his lovely day, too often a beggar from his guests. The northerner has been losing his life, and in losing it he has found it. Or again, there have been races which have held the lordship of the world. In past ages the Greek citizen was the type of physical beauty, and the Roman soldier the ideal of manly vigour. But these were days when neither Greek nor Roman cared to save their lives, but were most willing to squander them. In exhausting vigils, in forced marches on starvation diet, in the endurance of searching hardships, and in the hand-to-hand struggle on many a battlefield, these dauntless heroes were reckless with their lives. But the years came when first the Greek and then the Roman began to cherish and shield the life of the body, and hired others to face their perils and fight their battles. They sank into races of mean

stature and enfeebled strength. The savage tribes swept down upon them and harried their cities and mocked their rulers. Whosoever will save his life in the body shall lose it ; and whosoever will lose it shall find it.

II. Think of it, in the second place, in *the sphere of our daily social and temporal life*. By the social and temporal life I mean the life we live in the world of our interests, ambitions, gains, and achievements, the life which occupies men's minds and engrosses their energies. It is that life in which many men seek their pride and joy, their satisfaction and honour. Here again the man who will save his life shall lose it. The law ordains that were a man to make this life his supreme care, to refuse every duty and escape every burden which might hinder his success, he will lose the very life he covets. While the man who is willing to sacrifice it, to surrender its ambitions and its gains, for the sake of costly duties, and at the call of honour, will discover, to his amazement, that he has found it to the full.

Lift your eyes and look into the working of this law in the life of interests, gains, and ambitions, of joys and attainments and rewards. Here is a man whose life consists in his gaining public honours. He leaves no stone unturned to bring his name before the people. He curries favour with the populace and he courts popularity. He is unwearied

in his public appearances, and adroit in being on the front seat of every platform. He makes judicious donations which are never anonymous. What is his reward? In the day when honours are bestowed the people pass him by for some man who has resolutely fought and mastered this craving and temptation for popularity. They choose another who has served them simply and modestly in a pure purpose of good, heedless of what happened to himself and his name. Here is another who thinks that the way to gain power and consequence and to enter into a deep satisfaction is by making money. He bends his whole energy to that end. He toils early and late. He is merciless in business. He grinds the face of his employees until they hate his footstep. He exacts his pound of flesh from the man who is down. He is determined that whoever loses, the loss of the life he craves shall not be his. What happens? Now and again he does acquire wealth. He builds his fine house, maintains his county estate, and buys a title from a political party. Quite as frequently he does nothing of the kind. His self-centred greed warps his judgment, and he goes blindly into ventures which simple eyes see to be fraught with disaster. But even when he has succeeded, and has gained the wealth he desired, has he gained his life? Who honour him? Not even the servants whom he hires. Who speak well of him? Not even the dependents whom he feeds. Who give him a

cordial welcome to their home? Not even the men who envy him. Who counts him friend, and pays him love's debt and gratitude's reward? No one, not even the men to whom he pays assiduous court. How many men there are in every community who have thus sought to save their lives and have fallen under the awful penalty of this law that they have lost them!

Let me cite to you, for the sake of making this much needed truth not only clear but memorable, an instance from actual life. This instance has been given a classic form by Robert Browning in the poem he calls "The Lost Leader." Who the lost leader was is still in debate. I, for my part, am unwilling to think that the poet had Wordsworth in his mind. But what the lost leader was stands out in saddening vividness. He was a poet who was endowed with the poet's consecration and power of dream. He was tempted by an honour which promised him the glory the poet craves. He yielded. He accepted an office which seemed to proffer him fulness of life. As Browning points out, in the moment when he truckled to this worldly honour, he lost all that his poetic inspiration might have gained. He lost his life in thinking to save it. Listen to the poet's scathing words—

"Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote.

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Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devil's triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !”

“Whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.” Think for a moment what a splendid procession of men and women pass before our eyes whose lives give assent to that truth. Spenser, refusing to be patronised, and living in neglect and penury, but leaving his “Faerie Queene” as the immortal flower of his spirit. Milton, disdaining the joys which courted him and the honours he might have worn, choosing to suffer affliction with those whom he held to be the people of God, and leaving behind him that record of a life lived out as in the great Taskmaster's eye, and that poem whose visions are shining with heavenly light. Joan of Arc, relinquishing all that is sweet and tender to youth, and refusing to be seduced by the glittering rewards that were laid at her feet, neither quailing nor uttering querulous complaint when she faced scorn and calumny and death, and yet finding a life which was larger and nobler than she dreamed, and a praise which was sweeter than she coveted. Mazzini, giving up all that men commonly think makes life worth living, spending his years in privation and in peril, and yet entering into a life of such scope and power, that Italy knows no dearer name and no loftier inspiration. Florence Nightingale twice turning her back on the sweet and joy of life, once to lift up the mean lives of helpless

girls in a London street, and again to walk in Scutari,

“Through miles of pallets thickly laid
With sickness in its foulest guise,”

and finding a life which every good woman would count it a supreme joy to live. We can summon up name after name, down to the last simple and unknown man or woman who has given up, for the sake of duty or honour or truth, for the sake of all Christ stands for, what seems to make life large and lovely and full of delight, only to find that it was larger and lovelier and more delightful in the path of self-denial. They all cry to us, “Whosoever will lose his life for Christ’s sake shall find it.”

III. Think of it, in the third place, in *the sphere of the spiritual life*. By the spiritual life is meant that inner and devout life of faith, and hope, and love, which pulses in joy and in peace. The way to gain this life is not to seek it. The way to find it is to be willing to lose it. Let a devout man set the peace that passeth all understanding, and the joy that is unspeakable, and the hope that maketh not ashamed, before his mind as his aims, and he will not find them. Let him obey the will of God ; let him do what is honest and right and true ; let him be brave and dutiful and honourable ; let him be quite regardless whether he lose or gain what makes up the spiritual life, and he will find the peace and joy which he has not sought.

This should be a commonplace in religious teaching, yet it is a dark saying. We have a hymn, a very beautiful and appealing evening song, one of whose verses begins—

“Grant us Thy peace throughout our earthly life.”

But it may be questioned if a prayer for peace should ever be on Christian lips. The New Testament gives us no warrant for it. The peace which we are to seek and pursue is not the peace that passeth all understanding, but that peace between man and God, and between man and man, which is a paramount duty of a Christian spirit. To seek peace, and joy, and the quick and pulsing emotion of a spiritual life, is never to find them. The monks who have escaped out of the world of strife find that they have taken in all life's dispeace and care and sorrow with them into their cells. Men and women who are ever striving to work themselves, or to pray themselves, into exquisite moods and delightful feelings, who are eager to find the rush and throb of spiritual emotion, become morbid, introspective, gloomy. No! Let men be willing to lose this life of the self-culture of the soul. Let them do their daily duty. Let them take up the burdens of others. Let them spend themselves in brightening other men's lives. Let them pray for others, and be brief in prayer for themselves. In a word, let them be willing to lose their lives, and they shall find them.

There is a great passage in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians which was written when he was given a vision of Christ fulfilling this law. Paul sees Jesus in heaven hearing the cry of a lost world, and knowing the anguish of the Father's love and sorrow. He sees Him facing the loss—the loss of that life He had with the Father before the world was—the life of unbroken communion and untroubled joy. He sees Him losing it. "He counted it not a prize." He sees Him passing on, step by step, called to lose it again and again. He marks Him in Nazareth in the shelter of His mother's love, and growing up among its devout customs and helpful intimacy. He sees Him losing that life also, and going out to the wind-swept highways of Galilee and Samaria and Judea. He sees Him finding a life there which had its high moments, its gracious friendships, its tempting joys. But Paul sees Him losing even that life, and going from Pilate's judgment-seat in company with the malefactors to make His completing loss at Calvary. But Paul marks also, in his vision, that Christ finds His life. He finds all He would have lost had He sought to save it. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

"For My sake," says Jesus. This losing of one's

life must be under no rash bravado, no thoughtless impulse, no selfish exaltation, no proud self-crucifixion. It must be under the power of a high ideal, at the call of a solemn and tender vow, in the service of some wise and helpful cause, in the fulfilment of some noble task; in a word, it must be for whatever Christ's name stands for that we lose our lives. Then, and only then, shall we find them.

X

THE INFINITE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—MARK viii. 36.

JESUS placed an infinite value on the human soul. It is declared in everything He says and does. It trembles in His prayers, thunders in His rebukes, and gives a note of tenderness to His consolations. It was one of the chief inspirations of His ministry. He is not setting a sum in arithmetic when He asks, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” He is expressing in His own arresting and unforgettable way the infinite value of the human soul.

It will be clear in a moment why Jesus placed this infinite value on the soul, when we understand what He means by it. He means the spiritual nature with its capacities, and powers, and possibilities both of growth and nurture, and of decline and death. He raises no question here of its relationship to other organs. He enters into no theory of its qualities. He is not looking away to its eternal destiny, although that is involved. He is fixing

our thought on the one spiritual fact that every man has a spiritual nature, a capacity for faith and hope and love and joy and fear and pain, keen powers of thought and aspiration, and, in the depths of his being, a conscience and a will. That spiritual nature which looks out of every man's eyes, fashions his words and deeds, exults with joy, suffers anguish through pain, which may be disciplined and perfected to holiness, or may be defiled and corrupted until the man is fit to be a companion of devils—that is the priceless thing about a man. Here Christ declares that the refusal to deny oneself and to take up the cross and follow Him will result not only in losing one's life, and by that He means all that life can be in its fulness and vigour and spiritual power, but he will also lose that deeper and inward life which throbs in the soul—the very capacity for living as God would have us live. A man may lose not only his life, but, as Luke interprets our Lord's saying, "will lose himself." Even if there be not a total loss of this capacity, he shall be damaged through the lowering of his tone and tainting of his moral nature.¹

¹ The R.V. translates the word *ψυχή* by "life" throughout this passage, using the not over-wise rule of the grammarian to translate the same Greek word by the same English word. It would have been better, if this rule is of binding obligation, to render by the word "soul." It seems to me evident that Jesus was not repeating His first warning, but was passing on to a deeper and more fatal loss. Luke's text points out plainly that that was his reading of our Lord's word. And when Jesus says a man will find his life in verse 35, He is plainly using the word in a different sense from His use in verse 36. The rendering of the A.V. is, I think, to be preferred.

Let us then look at the truth which Christ enshrines in His striking question. Let us consider the implications and consequences and urgencies of the infinite value of the soul. Let us look at Christian doctrine and Christian duty, and at Christ's appeal in its light. In that way we shall bring in upon our consciences the force of Christ's arresting question.

I. Look, in the first place, at *faith in a personal God in the light of the infinite value of the soul*. It is not too much to say that faith in a living and loving personal God is only a faint flush of certainty in many minds. The material world presses upon us with a subtle mastery. The sweep and sufficiency of the reign of law paralyse and overawe our thoughts. The intense preoccupation of men's minds with the life of this interesting world blinds our inner vision. The keenly felt misery of life dulls our sensitiveness to the thought of God. There are multitudes who never pray. There are many who bow their heads and offer petitions with a vague suspicion that God is only an impersonal force, a wave of energy, a fount of being, about whom they know little, who knows little and cares less about them. How many cry, "My God!" with that accent of assured trust which is native to a believing man?

Yet think how the case really lies. You sit here, a being with a personality, with a conscience and a will, with a quick and living spiritual nature which loves and hates, hopes and fears, with faculties for

planning and purposing, with the power of rising to heights of passionate devotion. Let your thoughts, if you shrink from scrutinising yourself, rest on any one of the multitude with which you mingle every day. Take some of the commonest experiences of life. Think of the young man who is surging with ambitions, eager with dreams he would not confess, and exhilarated by his imaginings in the inner chamber of his mind. Think of the young woman who is trembling under the influence of a pure and holy passion which is being quickened within her. Think of the man who is sitting with heart bowed down, widowed in a lonely home; of the woman whose mind is throbbing with her thoughts—daring, resourceful, self-sacrificing—of rescue for her profligate son; of the father whose life is a silent heroic struggle to provide for his demented child. Whence comes this swift-darting power of thought, this faculty of love, this will for sacrifice? Have these been evolved by chance and the play of plastic circumstance? Are they the happy hits of a freakish nature? How mercilessly the best thought of the day scoffs at such fancies! How keen is the sarcasm it can pour upon such suggestions! What does it tell us with grave and incontestable proof? There is nothing in the plant which is not in the seed. There is nothing in the most delicately articulated organism which is not in the germ. There is nothing in the most exquisitely beautiful and most passionately tender creature which was

not in the remotest spark of life from which he sprang. There can be nothing in the consequent that was not implicitly in the cause. If there exists a creature with a spiritual nature, who loves and aspires, is conscious of sin, is unquenchably athirst for righteousness, there must be a Creator with a spiritual nature who loves and grieves at iniquity, and thirsts to see righteousness as the law of all life. In a word, in the moment that a man becomes conscious that he is a living soul he reaches faith in a personal God.

II. Look, in the second place, at *Christian doctrine in the light of the infinite value of the soul*. There are many who believe in a living and loving personal God, but they find the truth of Christian doctrine difficult to accept. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the Resurrection from the dead, and the Redemption of the Cross are incredible to them. They do not disavow them because they are incomprehensible or mysterious. They know and have daily proof that we are in constant touch with mysteries as great, and with experiences as incomprehensible. They know that nature and human life are full of suggestions of the Incarnation and the Resurrection and the Cross. Every birth is as great a marvel as the virgin birth of Christ. Every little green blade that lifts itself out of the dark soil and leaves the wrappings of the seed behind it, is as wondrous a renewal of life as the rising of Christ from the dead.

Every act of saving love, down to that of the poor girl who lost her life in rescuing from the burning house the little child placed in her charge, is as instinct with a passion of redemption as the death of the Cross. But they feel the incongruity of these Christian doctrines. They are such transcendent movements of power and love. They are such incredible deeds of grace. Here is the thought that lurks in many minds. What are the men and women who meet us in the streets, and live in the rabbit-hutches of our large cities, and toil in their humble occupations, with their narrow thoughts, and mean lives, and short span of days, that the central affections of the universe should be moved for them? This aggressive and confident doubt has been expressed in literature in every generation. You may have read that modern example of this attitude in the somewhat turgid and melodramatic little book, *God and the Ant*. Have you considered the reason of its fascination? Its power lies wholly in the vivid way in which it presents the meanness, the pettiness, the insignificance of the individual man. What is a man, it suggests, but a crawling ant on a heap? You cannot help asking as you read, what am I, and what are my neighbours, whose lives I know, that God should become enshrined in a human form, should hang on the cross, and rise again from the dead for us? Where is the end worthy of all this marvellous sacrifice? What is this whole little insignificant world of ours that the Infinite should take

it up even into His thought? Have these great deeds been done merely that our brief and trivial human lives might run in truer lines, or that a transient human society might be more full of sweetness and purity? That end is not worthy of the means. No! we must see something deeper. You must see in the men and women around you, in the meanest unit of humanity who crosses your path, this priceless spiritual nature—his soul. You must realise, although you look on a face so hardened that it can scarcely manifest shame, those powers of knowledge and will and desire, those faculties of faith and prayer, those capacities for receiving the energies of God, and those possibilities of being conformed unto the likeness of Christ. Then the cradle of Bethlehem, and the cross of Calvary, and all the solemn gladness and awe of the Easter Morn, when the risen Lord was seen, will not be too great for your faith.

Ah! when a man sees, with Jesus, the priceless value of the soul, not only his conception of the truth of Christian doctrine but all his other estimates are changed. The pride and the humiliation of empires, the subtleties of statecraft, the clash of political parties, the rise and fall of markets, the greeds and ambitions of the world, are seen in their true perspective. Already the dust of oblivion is settling upon them all. When an egotistic and thoughtless painter told Napoleon that Art alone brought forth the immortal, he found Napoleon's piercing and

searching eyes fastened upon him in silence for a moment. "How long," asked Napoleon, "will a painting endure?" "About eight hundred or a thousand years." Napoleon turned away with the quiet words of scorn, "What an immortality!" That master mind saw with his unerring insight the brevity, the transiency, and the perishableness of the achievements of the world. But the renewing, the uplifting, and the perfecting of the human soul, if there be immortality at all, is the one eternal and enduring work of man. It is the infinite value of the soul that makes it worthy, not only of the urgent prayers and more strenuous endeavours of man, but of the passionate desire and self-emptying sacrifice of God.

III. Look, in the third place, at *life and duty in the light of the infinite value of the soul*. I think that all of you must catch yourselves at times asking in the silence of your thought what some men live for. The answers you are inclined to give are somewhat like these. Some men live without purpose, simply because they are alive and the instinct of life compels them to go on living. Others live for the attainment of certain ends—the making of a competence, the care and training of their children, the fulfilment of duties which have become second nature to them, or the gratification of desires seldom disclosed, but very real and dominating. Others live for what may be called

higher ends. They devote themselves to helpful services and public duties, and to the furtherance of the causes which are bound up with the well-being of men. Yet what is the almost universal complaint, as men grow older, but that it is all weariness and vexation of spirit? Long before the fires of youth have burnt low, our appetite and zest for the things once eagerly craved has been satisfied, and a strange sadness falls upon the spirit even in hours of triumph. The man who has climbed to a high seat, and is looked upon with envy, confesses to himself that the elevation is only a molehill after all. "What shadows we are," said Burke in a moment when he was startled by a sudden and unexpected death, "and what shadows we pursue!" What is the cause of this apathy, and this sense of the meanness of much human endeavour, and this awakening to the triviality of it all? It is the coming in upon the mind of the thought of the infinite value of the human soul. No man can fail to sink into this low mood who does not look into every man's face and realise that, behind every glance and every word, there is a spiritual organ—the soul. What really lives and suffers the slow miseries, what enacts the thrilling tragedies, and what gives romantic colour to our nights and days, is the spiritual nature within. The soul is the organ, and life is the function, and the man whose soul is dormant is not living at all. "Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish."

Realise how a man with his soul awake lives his life and fulfils his duty. He goes down to his daily toil. His neighbour is not a poor clod out of whom he can make a certain profit, or extort a high and unearned wage, or sweat almost to his death. He is a man of like passions, hopes, fears, loves, spiritual destiny with himself. He enters upon his pleasures. The men and women he meets are not mere puppets to dance to his fancies, mummers to wile away his idle hours, or creatures to slake his passions. They are spiritual beings whom he cannot, dare not, employ to their shame or tempt to their undoing. He goes to the house of sorrow. He has no commonplace word of comfort to those who weep. He cannot prate with Hamlet's mother, "Death is so common." Death is never common to him, for he remembers the soul. He realises how the soul can suffer, how awful is its loneliness, and how unappeasable its grief, and his words and deeds are chastened into grace. He passes into the home of the poor. He does not mark its coarseness and bareness, or think meanly of its narrow ways and anxious struggle. He sees the soul with its exquisite delicacy, its brave content, its hourly sacrifices. He sits down at the rich man's table. He marks the grace and elegance of the appointments. He sees the costliness of the pictures on the wall. He knows how rare are the viands, and how softly the footfalls pass behind him. Yet he has neither envy nor scorn, for he sees the soul, and

he knows that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." He is aware that life is little altered by any of these things, and that the same joys and sorrows, the same hopes and fears, sit down with him here as at the table of the poor. He spends an hour amidst simple and unlearned men, and listens to their talk over the obscure toils of their life. Through it all he hears the whisper of the soul. He is privileged to keep the company of the scholar. He notes his wealth of knowledge, his aptness of illusion, his felicity of phrase. But he sees beneath the accident of his scholarship, and catches the throb of that spiritual nature which is the true being of the man. He finds himself in accord with

"Those teachers who instruct mankind
From just a shadow on a charnel wall,
To find man's veritable stature out,
Erect, sublime, the measure of a man,
And that's the measure of an angel."

I remember some years ago being present at a meeting held in honour of an old teacher who was passing into retirement. A large company had gathered together, among them men who had made their mark in public life. Several of these rose and spoke in the old man's praise. He was not a man of unusual attainments or of notable gifts, but he had evidently done these men, who were paying him honour, a service they had come long distances to acknowledge. As I listened to the words of

generous eulogy I discerned what it was that drew them all to respectful gratitude. The words they quoted with deepest feeling were not his pregnant comments on men and things, not his wittiest jests, and not his wisest counsels. They were the words in which they had felt the trembling of a deep passion, all the deeper for a shy man's reticence, which believed that each of them had a spiritual nature to be created anew in the image of Christ. These men, busy in the keen struggle of life, one by one bowed down in reverence before the man whose years had been spent, and whose duty had been fulfilled, under a supreme sense of the value of the soul.

The question of Jesus, "For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" is surely urgent in the light of these truths. Other questions have been put, such as, "What would it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his seeing?" or, "What would it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his hearing?" These questions do not rise to the height of Christ's awful alternative. The loss of the soul is not the loss of a faculty. It is spiritual death. It is the death of that spiritual nature which gives life its romance, lends to life's sorrows their significance, creates a true ideal of duty, and is quick with a sense of God. Surely the most urgent and imperative duty for a man is to save his soul. You have heard men sneer at the word

of the evangelist. There is a false and unchristlike religion whose one and only care is its personal safety, whose chief interest is its own spiritual culture. But that is not the saving of the soul in the teaching of Jesus. The saving of the soul is its renewal unto life, and its discipline unto godliness, and its exercise in the words and deeds of faith and charity. Surely that is the first duty of every man. It should be his duty to make his calling and election sure before he concerns himself with the saving of others. You would not commend the leper who was busy with other men's leprosy and careless of his own scab. You would not praise the thief who was busy teaching other men honesty. You must keep your own doorstep clean before you try to cleanse your neighbour's. We have the highest authority for the counsel to cast the beam out of our own eye before we attempt to pluck the mote out of our neighbour's. Let us have no secular cant on this subject. Your first duty, though not your last, your most urgent service to the world, though not your highest, is to save your soul. It is the preparation and equipment for doing the will of God and blessing other men. Once only did Jesus use the word "fool" with the sharp edge of an un pitying condemnation. That was to the man who was so busy gaining the world that he had lost his soul.

XI

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall reward every man according to his works.”—MATT. xvi. 27.

THE third declaration which Jesus made to His disciples when He saw them quailing at the prospect of the Cross is the most solemn of all. He announces His coming again in the glory of His Father, with His angels. In that day of His manifestation and power and triumph, He shall reward every man according to his works.

This prophecy of the second coming is largely a dead letter in the creed of to-day. It has become a hard saying to many sincere believers. Some have quietly let it slip into the limbo of things that may be forgotten. Others have begun to believe that we have lost the key of its interpretation. They read the passages which speak of it with an unwillingness to accept any of the confident expositions of others, and a diffidence to offer their own. The grammarians have searched the words in which the prophecy has been detailed, and while they

cannot escape the conclusion that Jesus promised that He would come again, they declare that they find the record so confused that they are unable to determine what Jesus precisely said. Yet there are three clear truths which are as significant as they are incontestable, and these must be recognised in any teaching on the second coming of the Lord.

The first of these truths is the large place that His second coming occupied in the mind and the outlook of Christ. This is not dependent on any word. Towards the close of His ministry Christ's eyes were ever looking away to a horizon beyond the Cross. In the last week of His life on earth His message reaches its climax of impressiveness, and its highest note of joy, in the declaration that He will come again. The second truth is that the New Testament Church held the certainty of His second coming with a vivid and tenacious faith. It was the spring of their invincible hope, the quick and awful motive of their service, the ground of their patience, the source of their consolation. "The Lord shall come!" "The time is short!" "The Lord is at hand!" These words rang like bells pealing in the hour before the dawn throughout the whole boundaries of the infant Church. These persecuted believers strengthened their hope and nourished their courage with the assurance that the day of the Lord was near. They went to their rest at night in the belief that they might be awakened by the sound of the last trump and the

fluttering of angel wings before the morning came. As year after year passed away they clung with a wistful longing to the saying that before St. John had been called home, Jesus with the print of the nails would again walk in the garden of Calvary. When they were taunted with the unfulfilled prophecy, they cherished their stubborn conviction that suddenly all scorning tongues would be silenced, and the Lord would be seen, coming in the clouds, to redress every wrong, and to set up the rule and realm of God among men. The third truth is that Christ has not come as these devout hearts expected. Nineteen hundred winters have come and gone and still the Church longs and waits. Sixty generations of scoffers have asked, "Where is the promise of His coming?" No sign from heaven breaks the silence of the skies. No glorious apparition of the risen and glorified Son of man has been seen. Here, then, we have the explicit declaration in the attitude and prophecy of Christ; the confident interpretation of Christ's promise by those who heard it; the centuries in which believing men have looked in vain for His radiant advent. What is of faith as to the second coming of Christ?

Now there is one controlling word which is the key-word of every reference to the second coming. This word must be interpreted by any one who will honestly face the statements of the New Testament, and will endeavour to relate the three truths of which I have spoken. That controlling word is

that Christ's coming is always spoken of as *a coming in glory*. It is a glory which is described as His own, and His Father's, and that of the angels. When we ask what this glory means we must not let our minds be seduced to think of some dazzling and dramatic splendour, and we must beware lest the glowing pictures of the poet of the Book of Revelation be literally rendered by any prosaic mind. The glory of which Christ speaks is simply the manifestation of His own, and His Father's, and the angels' power. It is the manifestation of the power of His character, of His grace and truth, of His authority and His law, of His personal and of His conquering presence.

Now such a manifestation plainly must be fulfilled in more ways than many dream, and in more periods than many are willing to believe. This coming in glory—the glory of the power of His character and grace and personal authority—may be marked in the great crises of history of the Church and the kingdom of God. There are, I believe, four marked fulfilments of this prophecy—four times when men shall truly interpret the mind of Christ, as they say, “The Lord has come.” The first is: His coming in the glory of His resurrection. The second is: His coming in the glory of His judgment. The third is: His coming in the glory of His kingdom. The fourth is: His coming in the glory of His final appearing. In each of these there was that manifestation of

Christ's power, and of God's rule, and of the angels' office, which constitute the glory of the Son of man. Let us take these in order.

I. *Christ's coming in the glory of His resurrection.* That fulfilment Jesus clearly foretold when He declared that "This generation should not pass away until these things had been fulfilled." "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death until they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom." The disciples understood that He would come again in their lifetime. Nothing else can be understood from this clear and plainly authentic saying. They were not mistaken, for all of them, except Judas, saw Christ return after He had passed from His earthly life. When He came back from the realms of death and met Mary in the garden, and spoke with the apostles in the upper room, and walked by the seashore, these simple hearts remembered His promise and saw its fulfilment. The cry, "The Lord is risen, and has appeared unto Simon!" is the jubilant word of men who have had a prophecy that was too great for their hopes wondrously fulfilled. Their question to Him, "Lord, will Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" reveals their mind. They believed that His reappearing among them was His promised coming again. He had manifested His glory and His Father's, and they had seen the angels'. Now, therefore, the time had

surely come when He would set up that kingdom of God, visible and triumphant, for which they still stubbornly hoped and prayed. What else can we say but that it was the coming of the Son of man? Men saw the glory of the Father. They saw the glory of the angels. They saw the judgment between the living and the dead, between men of this generation and men of faith. Yet when the forty days were over, even while it was passing they learned that this coming was not the only or the complete fulfilment of the prophecy. They looked forward to a time when in some higher and better way "this same Jesus" would come again.

II. *Christ's coming in the glory of His judgment.*

Judgment is an accompaniment of every coming of Christ. One mark of it is that "He shall reward every man according to his works." Never did Jesus come in any wise into any company, whether as a teacher by the seashore, or a guest at a table, or a prisoner before a judge, but He passed judgment upon them. Never shall He come in any wise but the generation to which He comes shall be judged, sometimes openly and dramatically, as often with a vengeance whose meaning is seen only in after days.

Jesus has engrossed this truth in a memorable saying. His disciples were so fascinated by this thought of His second coming, and so eager about its time, that they asked Him, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy

coming?" Jesus condenses His reply in a picture which is at once a note of time and a statement of a law. "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Look at the picture in that saying. We see a wide open desert, a boundless stretch of sand lying under the blaze of the sun. A camel, exhausted and dying, is lying in the midst. He has been left behind by the master of the caravan which has passed on, heedless of the last agonies of his death. As he falls a speck is seen far off in the cloudless blue. It grows larger with every moment. It is a vulture drawn from afar by the sight and scent of death. Another, and another, and still another, swiftly follows. From all parts of the seemingly empty heaven they bend their flight and whirl round the doomed camel. But they do not touch him. His limbs are pitifully helpless. His eyes are glazing. His breath is only a broken sob. But death has not yet claimed him. When the feeble heart has ceased to beat, and the last tremor has gone, when the camel that was a living and breathing creature has become a carcase, the vultures swoop down and make the dead beast their prey. "Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the vultures be gathered together." Into this picture Jesus has set both a sign of His coming and an accompaniment of it. He states the law that wherever there is corruption there the eagles of destruction will be gathered together. He will not send forth these angels of judgment until the

hour is struck. But when corruption has reached the point of death, then He will come in judgment, then His angels shall destroy.

The application of that truth can be seen at a glance down the history of Christ's kingdom. It was first marked when the Roman eagles gathered round Jerusalem. As Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives, when the disciples questioned Him, He saw the vultures of vengeance hovering over the city. He wept at the sight. But her hour had not yet come. It was still the time of the green tree. The city had not yet become a carcase of death. But the day would come when the legions of Titus would gather round about her in a merciless siege. There would be a mad inrush of callous Roman soldiers, and the smoke of her burning temple would ascend to heaven, and never should that temple be built again. Christ has come.

So down all the centuries Christ comes again. He came in the judgment which befell the Roman empire, when Hun and Goth and Vandal swooped down upon the enfeebled and corrupt city. He came when moral death set its ghastly seal on the rulers of Paris, and her streets ran with blood because the angels of destruction were gathered against her. Whenever and wherever there is moral and spiritual death in national life, in social life, or in the life of the soul, then Jesus comes, and comes in the glory of His judgment, and His angels with Him, to reward men according to their works.

III. *Christ's coming in the glory of His kingdom.*

We must take no narrow reading of the glory of God, and no limited understanding of the angels who herald and accompany every coming of Christ. They are not only vultures swooping down on the carcase. They are not all armed with sword and spear. His angels are His ministers who do His pleasure. They are also men and women who wear His grace, witness His message, and do His will. They are the influences and inspirations which flow in upon men's hearts through His Spirit. They are the light, and knowledge, and love of beauty, and tender compassion, which move men to righteousness and to chivalry. They are the forces He has called into being, and quickens by His words. These are the angels of His glory. In the times of great social and moral advance we hear their voices, we witness their power, and we know that the Son of man has come in the glory of the kingdom of His Father.

Let me set down, with the briefest possible mention, some of these outstanding comings of the Lord. In the fourth century after His death the whole Christian world began to muse upon the person of Christ. Councils were summoned, that men who loved Him might gather together, and make clear to themselves His Godhead. As they pondered His words, and opened their hearts to His Spirit, the Son of man came in power. They saw Him in the clouds of glory. In later centuries,

when the mind of Europe had long lain in death under the darkness and despotism of the Mediæval Church, the breath of a new learning from the treasures of the old Greek literature quickened men's dormant minds. Then, with this new equipment, they opened the New Testament, and they beheld Christ's glory as they followed His footsteps and pondered His words. Again the Son of man had come in the power of His kingdom. In the fifteenth century Luther opened the long-sealed Bible, and learned that God loved even little children to come to Him and speak with Him face to face, and that every man might pass into His presence and call Him Father, and that men are saved by believing in Christ alone. Then the Son of man had come again in His glory.

Let me point out with more detail only one of these many marked comings of Christ. It has a singular beauty and significance. Those who are familiar with the history of England know how low and degraded was the moral life of its people towards the close of the eighteenth century. The masses were sunk in ignorance. They lived dull and brutish lives. The richer classes were spendthrift, drunken, profligate. Men who sat in high places were openly and callously licentious. The Christian Church was indifferent, even where it was not unbelieving. Its ministers were regardless of their own souls. Only here and there did the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the

face of Jesus Christ feebly shine. Then came John Wesley and his evangelists. A new faith and a true repentance held men's hearts. Men and women were heard crying out in fear. Prayers and songs were heard upon lips accustomed only to curses. A new moral ideal shone before men's eyes. An unknown reverence for womanhood, a strange pity for the child, an unaccustomed compassion for the toiler, a new shame at the condition of the slave, were born in men's hearts. It was the coming of the Son of man in glory, and every eye saw Him and every ear heard His angels' songs. So Christ shall continue to come in ways of which we do not dream. In social renewal, in larger conceptions of His kingdom and His glory, in deeper knowledge of His love and grace, in more passionate vision of His person and His love, men shall see the glory of the Lord.

IV. *Christ's coming in the glory of His final appearing.* Christ's resurrection, when He was seen of men, did not fulfil either His own promises or the early believers' assured expectations. Nor can we think that His coming in the decisive judgments of the world's history, nor His coming in the progressive growth and development of His kingdom, are the fulfilments of His repeated words. Even although we are willing to believe that the teaching of Jesus has been coloured and complexioned by the tender passion of over-credulous hearts, and even

although we are tempted to think that God may have been leading men by illusion, the truth of His coming again stands out as a solemn necessity. If there is a risen, a living, a loving Lord, if He is a Person, if we are to meet Him and see Him, and if there is to be an end to the present dispensation, no issue is conceivable but one in which we shall see and know, and be seen and known.

But mark how this clear and undeniable truth has been obscured and demeaned by a petty interpretation of deep words, and an unwise definiteness about unimportant details. We do not know the time of His final appearing. Those prophetic calendars, with their daring dates, are an irreverence. Jesus lifted His hand to forbid them when He said, "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, not the angels, nor the Son of man, but only My Father which is in heaven." "It is not for you to know the times and seasons which the Father hath kept in His own power." All that sentimental and romantic dream that Jesus will return to the hills of Judea is baseless. He did not say that He would stand again upon the Mount of Olives, and He warned men against going out to look for Him, when they heard the cry of some misguided enthusiast, "Lo! Christ is here, or lo! Christ is there." All the figures which are employed bid us conceive of a manner of coming which is august, transcendent, heavenly. Nor must we tie ourselves down to any captivating conception of

a glory which may flash in the eyes of men. With the remembrance of how the Jewish Church blundered, and failed to interpret their own prophecies, we shall be diffident when we describe the manner of Christ's coming again.

"They were all looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high;
Thou camest, a little baby thing,
That made a woman cry."

As the Jews failed to anticipate *how* Christ would come for the first time, so Christians should remember that they may fail to anticipate *how* He shall come the second time. Yet His coming the second time is as certain as His first advent, and it is an easier and a gladder hope. "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Sadducees."

But why is the final appearing of the Lord so long delayed? Why have devout believers been so greatly mistaken? There are two clear and wise and sufficient reasons. The first lies in *the inability of human eyes to see the perspective of God*. In nothing is it more true that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and His ways than our ways, than in the time and mode of every coming of the Son of man. God has purposes which His most intimate friend is not able to understand. God has vistas along which no human eye can look. There is an illusion which is familiar to every traveller in lands where high mountains lift themselves across vast distances. From some of

the favourite view-points in Switzerland the higher peaks of the Alps can be seen, in seasons of calm weather, as though they were only a few miles away. To cross a single valley, and perhaps a narrow lake, would bring one to their base. But many a ridge lying unseen, and many a hill which is unknown, rises between the observer and the glistening snows of the far-off peak. The mountains of Moab in the morning light seem only half a day's journey from Jerusalem. When the evening has come the pilgrim in the Holy Land sees them lying a long, hazy, inaccessible, and distant range. So human eyes look out toward the coming of the Lord Jesus with the print of the nails. Now and again they think that in a generation or two men will see His face. In hours of wider thought they realise that the hour has not struck on God's clock of time. They see that God has great purposes to be fulfilled. Yet they are assured that though the Lord seems to delay His coming, He will come, and they shall see Him and know Him whose love will not let them go. He will reward them also according to their works.

The second reason lies in *the long-suffering of God*. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." That is the wise and cogent reasoning of a New Testament believer, face to face with this delay in

the coming again of Christ. God is not only the Taskmaster, the Judge, the King. He is the Sower who waits until the harvest. He is the Husbandman who purges His vine. He is the Gardener who is patient with the tree that cumbers the ground. There are races who must be called to the knowledge of Christ. There are nations to be brought to faith and repentance, some of whom may be born in a single day. There are Churches to be led into larger truths, gentler charities, wiser services, holier consecrations. There are men and women who are yet to be jewels in Christ's crown. There are heights of devotion to be climbed, victories over sin and darkness and death to be achieved. There are sanctities to be worn as the common garb of daily life. Then, but not till then, will the end come, and Christ shall come to deliver up the kingdom to His Father, and to reward every man according to his works.

XII

CHRIST ASHAMED

“For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father’s, and of the holy angels.”—LUKE ix. 26.

THIS was the most poignant and appealing word uttered by Jesus to hesitating disciples. It is the most poignant and appealing because it is personal and individual. It is the doom of the soul of the man who, refusing to follow Christ, has gone back when he saw the cross. He shall stand at last face to face with Him who called him. In that great day of Christ’s final appearing, the man who has seen Christ, and heard His call, and been drawn to follow Him, and yet shall have failed to answer that call and to confess Him, shall find Christ ashamed of him.

What is it to be ashamed? Shame is a moral emotion. It is the reaction of a moral passion against what is conceived to be a wrong. The confusion of a little child when caught in some petty theft, the flush on the young man’s brow when some base charge is laid against him, the

blanched cheek of a man when some fear of disgrace shakes his heart, are signals of this inward emotion. The strong moral anger of a brave spirit at any wanton ill-doing, and the pathetic sadness of a loving heart at another's fall, are nobler instances of the office of shame. When Jonathan rose from his father's table in anger at the wrong done to David, when Elisha looked on the brazen face of guilty Gehazi, when Jesus looked round about Him with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, this moral emotion of shame was in flood within. Shame is a flame kindled by the conscience, and it shines out in the blush on the cheek, and breaks forth in the brave word on the tongue.

But this moral emotion of shame may be perverted. A man may be ashamed of what is innocent, what is pure, what is holy. The man who hangs his head for honest poverty, who conceals his humble birth and lineage, who is pricked in his heart at his father's toil-worn hands, or his mother's simple speech, who is mortified by the homeliness of his narrow way of life, has vulgarised and degraded the emotion of shame. He no longer reverences the true, the good, and the beautiful. A mean pride, a false conception of the best things in life, a debasing desire for show and glitter, has eaten into the man's purity. In the same way men may be ashamed of Christ. They may be ashamed of all that Christ stands for—of meekness, and gentleness, and simplicity, and purity, and

self-sacrifice. Of this peril Jesus warned His disciples again and again. Through the fear of man, or the love of human praise, the lust of the world, the pride of life, and the lust of the eyes, through the corruption of his desires and affections, a man may come to be ashamed of Christ. Here Christ pronounces the final doom of such shame of Him and all it stands for. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."

I take two points. First, the disciple ashamed. Second, the Son of man ashamed. Let us take these in order.

I. In the first place: *the disciple ashamed.*

There are clearly marked ways in which men who may become disciples of Christ are tempted to be ashamed of Him. One of these is to be ashamed *to confess faith in His name*. This sin was clearly observed in Christ's own time. There were many who, like Joseph of Arimathea, were disciples "secretly for fear of the Jews." There were many who felt the charm of Christ's personality, and could say with conviction that never man spake as this Man. They found no joy so great as that of listening to His words. They were impelled to follow Him both by heart and conscience. They were convinced that He was the Messiah. But

they looked round about them. They saw the way of the cross stretching out before them, bare, cheerless, crucifying. They heard the taunts of the Pharisees. They felt the lash of scorn smiting them. They would be put out of the synagogue, and they would bring a sword into their own home. They would lose much that made life sweet to them. They were face to face with two shames. The shame of the world or the shame of Christ. They chose to make their covenant with the world, and were ashamed of Christ.

In the same way men are ashamed of Christ among ourselves. The cost of confessing faith in Christ is not so great now as it was then. The temptation may lie, in some cases, the other way, and the prospect of privilege and of favour allures many a man to a profession of faith who would be found to be chaff were the winnowing fan at work. Yet there are numbers who refuse confession through shame. They are, like Burns, "haunted by religion," but they will not cut themselves free from the base pleasures which bind them with one swift decisive stroke. They are like Erasmus, with full knowledge and inescapable convictions, but they will not take the costly and irrevocable step. There are young men and women in every congregation who are touched in their consciences and long to be on Christ's side. They crave for what He alone can give. They have moments of the heavenly vision, but they will not be obedient to it. They shrink

from some public ceremony of admission. They fear the jibes of the Sadducees of the market-place. They wince at the thought of the mockery of their former companions. They quail before the demand for a high, and serious, and devout life. The gate seems too strait and the way too narrow. It is too strait for man's ease or pride or passion. Year by year these once illumined souls grow duller and more apathetic. They have been ashamed of Christ. The first penalty falls upon them when they hear the voice of God more faintly, and feel the impulse to follow Christ more feebly. Their final doom will be apparent when Christ shall be ashamed of them when He shall come in His glory.

A second way in which men are ashamed of Christ is to be ashamed *to confess allegiance to His cause*. This is a more common cowardice among ourselves. Christianity is so popular that a confession of faith in Christ costs little. Christian morality rules our world. From our childhood we have been trained in Christian habits. To be a Christian is almost synonymous with being a white man. But there come the occasions of trial. There come the hour and the place where Christ's name is not honoured, and Christ's commands are not loved, and the redemption of Christ's cross is not held in regard, and then and there many who have confessed their faith in Him have been ashamed to confess their allegiance to His cause.

That test searched the early believers through

and through. There were many who had named Christ's name, and sang the hymns of praise in the joyous assemblies of His people, but when the storms of persecution broke over the Church they sought unworthy shelter. They were asked to burn a little incense before the statue of the Emperor. They were called upon to abjure the name of Christ. When they hesitated they were reminded of the loathsome dungeon where men and women died in a slow agony of hunger or disease. They were taken to hear the roar of the lions. A subtler and more tempting assault was made upon them when they were promised abundant earthly rewards for their apostasy. Then they fell, and denied their allegiance to Christ. To-day, in softer and yet as seductive ways, we are tempted to be ashamed of Christ. There are men and women who have confessed Christ's name, who never neglect His worship, who look forward to His peace in their dying hour. Yet when they go down to the world, and feel its hot breath on their faces, and hear the call of its rewards, and listen to the sneers at Christ and His name, they do not, they dare not, confess their allegiance to Him.

There are two men whom I set in the place of honour for their brave loyalty to Christ. One is the man who stands at the street corner to call men to accept the Evangel. I never pass him by but I bow in respect. His methods may be open to criticism. His speech may be rude and un-

grammatical. He may lack reverence, and depth, and winsomeness, and the calm of sweet reasonableness. There may mingle with his service a certain vanity and egotism, ay! but who among us can cast a stone at him? His message may be a poor reflection of the wisdom, and grace, and beauty of his Master, but who of us has fully known the mind of the Lord? This at least is clear, that he is not ashamed of Christ. To face men's scorn with a dauntless bearing, to mark their indifference without resentment, and to continue to bear testimony in the face of a criticism which is often coarse and ignorant, is a confession of Christ that will not be forgotten.

The second man whom I honour bears a still more difficult testimony. He it is who can rise in a company of men and women, disloyal to all that Christ has taught, and make his protest for his Master. Do you remember how Thackeray has shown us the most chivalrous and the most Christian man in all his gallery of brave and noble spirits attaining that high honour? When Colonel Newcome heard the gross song sung by the popular wit of the company, and received with rounds of applause, he rose, stirred to a deep moral anger, and flushed with shame, "Does any man say go on to such disgusting ribaldry as this? For my part I am not sorry that my son should see, for once in his life, to what shame and degradation and dishonour drunkenness may bring a

man." In that great day, when Christ comes again, of such deeds and of such men He shall speak in praise. "Whosoever confesseth Me before men, him will I also confess before My Father which is in heaven."

Can we follow these confessors of the Lord? We can sing our hymns of praise to Christ. We can jealously guard our privileges. We are quick to resent the word of any one who doubts our standing in Christ. But do we always acknowledge our allegiance to Him? Do not some of us stand in workshops where jests are passed and allusions are made which dishonour Christ, and we make no protest? Do not some of us sit at men's tables and hear talk which is not only scornful to Christian verities, but corrupting to Christian purity, and we make no sign? Do not some of us meet men at every turn of our lives who ignore all that Christ is to us, and deal with us as though we had never named His name, and we are silent? You say that you felt the hot blush when all that Christ lived for and died for was slighted and mocked at. My brother, Christ asks more than a blush. There is a time when it is a shame not to speak. However difficult it may be to know when and how to make our confession, and what to say and to do, and however unwilling you are to appear ostentatious or pharisaic, there are daily occasions in life when we must confess our allegiance, or stand under the condemnation of having been ashamed of Christ.

A third way in which we are ashamed of Christ is *to be ashamed of the sovereignty of His words*. Will you mark that Luke declares that Jesus said not only ashamed of Me, but "of My words," and there Luke engrosses a truth that touches the quick. There we all play the coward. Most of us would not deny our allegiance to Christ, cost what it might. Our courage, we humbly hope, would rise with the danger. Men have gone to the stake for Him who at first were aspen with fear. But this is the more searching test, that we shall not be ashamed of Christ's words. It is in His words that He has engrossed His witness, His revelation, His call, His command, His pathetic and entreating appeal, His law and His eternal promises. Nothing will so surely reveal what we are to Him, and what He is to us, as our meek and loyal acknowledgment of the sovereignty of His words.

What are the words of which, as Christ declares, we are most likely to be ashamed? They are the words at which, both when first spoken, and in all ages, men have been offended. They are the words which enshrine Christ's claims to be the light of our world, the bread of our life, the shepherd of our wandering ways, the way, the truth, and the life of all men, the Lord of time and eternity. They are the words which engross His unworldly beatitudes, laying upon us meekness, and mercifulness, and purity of heart, and tender thoughts of those who hate us and despise us. They are the words,

so solemn and so unforgettable, that we cannot serve God and Mammon, that every tree is known by its fruits, that with what measure we mete it shall be measured to us again, and that there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed. They are the words which repeat His inexorable demands. "Ye must be born again." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness." "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." They include that word especially which condenses them all into a single line, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." It is because of these hard sayings, as they claim for Jesus the sovereignty of our lives, that we go back and walk no more with Him.

It is easy to hang on our walls great master words of Christ, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." But to make all that is done under the shadow of that text pure, is the test of our loyalty to Christ. It is easy to take an interest in Christ's kingdom, and to be conspicuous in its service, but to go down to our daily business and to hear Christ's word "Follow Me" clearly above the babble of its sounds, and to obey, is the mark of our loyalty. It is easy to kneel in prayer, and to commit oneself to God's keeping, but to go forth to our pleasures and to hear Christ saying, "Lovest thou Me more than these?" and to make answer meet, is to confess Christ. A merchant was called upon by another who asked him to join in a

new venture. The inducements were most alluring. The basis of the proposal was financially sound. The profits were large and secure. The conduct of its affairs would not be a heavy addition to his labour. The speaker was persuasive and urgent. The merchant had almost yielded to the request to share in the enterprise. But its dividends were to be wrung out of a traffic which imperilled, and often degraded, the natives of the West Coast of Africa. There came to the tempted man an inward vision—do you know it?—of a face smitten with sorrow. He heard an inward voice—have you heard it?—“What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” He bowed down to the sovereignty of Christ’s words. He stood up with a clear and simply spoken word, No! He was not ashamed of Christ, and Christ shall not be ashamed of him.

II. In the second place, *the Son of man ashamed.*

What is the meaning of this shame of Christ? It seems at first sight a word which is out of drawing with the character of Jesus. It reads as though He could be guilty of retaliation and of revenge. Neither revenge nor retaliation, in any sphere of life, personal or social, economic or national, are allowable to Christian men. We wonder if Christ were acting on the motive of that somewhat ambiguous proverb, “I bide my time.” We wonder if He means us to believe that a time

would come when those who had failed to confess Him and acknowledge His sovereignty here, would be placed within His power, and then He would meet their appeal with contempt. The penalty of the man who has been ashamed of Christ is more awful than that. It is not the punishment by one who has come to the hour of his retaliation. It is a doom which is inevitable. It is the reaction of Christ's moral emotion of shame. That is as inevitable as the flush of scarlet on a young girl's face and the look of anguish in the eyes of those whose hearts are grieved. It will be that flush on Christ's face, and that look from Christ's eyes, which will reveal the coward's shame and make his doom heavier than he can bear.

What does Christ mean when He speaks of coming in His glory? The mediæval painters have wronged us here. They have pictured a scene of dazzling light, with angelic hosts on radiant wings, fresh from the throne of the majesty on high, and, in the midst, Jesus with His face set in inflexible scorn. But this is not the glory of the Son of man. The glory of Christ is not awful cloud, and dreadful majesty, and inexorable hate. The glory of Christ is "fulness of grace and truth." "He is the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It is the glory of the meek and lowly, all-loving and all-pitying, and yet infinitely holy Redeemer. That is the glory which every eye shall see. What is the glory of the Father? It is the

establishment of His rule and realm, out of which all things that offend and do iniquity shall be cast. What is the glory of the holy angels? It is the glory of a perfect reverence, a perfect humility, and a perfect service. "With twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." Realise, if you can, that there must pass into that sphere of light and love and holiness a mean, debased, and cowardly spirit who has been ashamed of Christ before the world's pride and scorn and passion. Realise, if you can, that there stands before Christ one who would not confess Him, nor be loyal to His truth and purity, nor accept the sovereignty of His word. Think of the awful light of that spiritual splendour shining in upon this miserable, shrivelled, worldly soul. What lot or part has he in this glory? What equipment has he for this world of holiness and service? He is a blot on its brightness. He is a leper in the holy place. He is the man without the wedding garment. He has only to lift his eyes to see the piteous condemnation, the shame, and the grief in the eyes of Christ, and fling himself out of that intolerable holiness, and to call upon the rocks to cover him and to hide him from the wrath of the Lamb.

There is a story in the Gospels which allows us to see into the heart of this mystery. "And Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down

together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with Him. And he denied Him, saying, Woman, I know Him not. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly." That penitent and sobbing man, who fled out of the presence of Christ, away from His look of shame, is the earthly picture of this heavenly mystery. No painter's eyes have ever seen, and no poet's heart has ever divined, and no seer's vision has ever beheld the doom of the man who has been ashamed of Christ. The shame of Christ is as unbearable as any hell. "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

XIII

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

“And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves : and He was transfigured before them.”—MARK ix. 2.

THE story of the Transfiguration may be simply told. Jesus was spending some days with His disciples in a religious retreat near Cæsarea Philippi. The time had passed in rest and fellowship and conversation on the things of the kingdom of God. One evening, towards the close of these days of quiet, He ascended one of the spurs of that mountain range whose crowning glory is Hermon, with its unfading snows. He went up, as His custom was, to pray. He took with him Peter and James and John, that He might show them more fully the secret of the Lord. They slept, as wearied men will sleep, as they also slept in the garden. Jesus continued all night in prayer to God. While He prayed, a marvellous change passed upon Him. “He was transfigured before them ; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was as white as the light.” There companied with Him Moses

and Elias, and they talked of His decease at Jerusalem. As this scene was displayed, the three disciples awoke, and they saw His glory and marked the two men who spoke with Him. Peter cried out under the impulse of his wonder and awe. While he spake, a cloud wrapped the mountain in its folds. The two heavenly visitors vanished. A voice called out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him." In the grey morning light they saw Jesus only.

This experience of Christ suffers some neglect from the modern preacher. The reasons for this neglect are clear. For one thing, it does not seem so vital, or so significant to Christ's work as the other crises of His earthly life. It is not ranked with His baptism, or His temptation, or His agony in the garden. Even Luke, if one may judge from the casual way in which he introduces it, does not set forth its vast moment to Christ. For another thing, men do not see that this story has much to say to themselves, or any direct bearing on human experience. Christ's silent years in Nazareth, His response to the call of His Father, His patient doing of the Father's will, the meek surrender of His life, and the passion of His cross, all come close to us and our daily lives. But the Transfiguration seems peculiar to Christ. It is too high for us. The third reason is a more formidable barrier. The story strains our faith and baffles our imagination. The shining of the face and the glistening of the

garment present little difficulty. But the visitors from the world beyond, and the voice out of the cloud, provoke us to question whether the scene was a vision or a reality to mortal sense. Expositors love the easy way as much as others, and so they willingly turn aside from mystery to dwell upon the carpenter's shop, to enforce the parables by the sea-shore, and to expound the Sermon on the Mount.

Yet there is no more significant experience in Christ's life. It touches our needs and hopes more closely than we think. To any one who remembers who Jesus Christ is, and what He has been and will be to men, no incident of His life is more credible. In all likelihood Jesus was often transfigured in His nights of lonely prayer, although there were no eyes to see Him. No experience set down in the Gospels more entirely becomes the Lord of Glory. To one who walked with God and spoke face to face with Him as a child to a father, round whom God's angels continually hovered, on whom the thoughts of all God's saints were set, it is only natural that the fashion of His face should alter, His raiment become as white as snow, and men of God commune with Him.

Let us look, first, at the setting of this experience; secondly, at its supreme moment; and thirdly, at its message.

I. In the first place, *the setting of the Transfiguration.*

Mark, to begin with, that this experience occurred at the breaking-point in His history—at the close of His ministry to the multitude and the beginning of His last lap to the goal. His days of public teaching are over. He will make no more journeys as an evangelist through the land. He has only one road to travel, and that is the way to Jerusalem. He will heal the sick when they cry to Him as He passes on. He will speak to the men and women of the city in the temple. He will spend the evenings of peace in Bethany. He will gather His chosen around Him in the upper room. But the one thing He is now burdened with is the purpose of death. The Cross has risen upon His horizon, and it remains an awful and overshadowing sorrow. "From this time forth Jesus began to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer." He was looking along the straight track of the sorrowful way as He went up the slopes of Hermon to spend the night in prayer.

A second fact to be remembered is that He went up after some days of searching and revealing conversation with His disciples. We have only a brief transcript, a page or two of notes, taken by some quiet disciple, of these talks of Jesus. But we know the topics of His addresses. He had spoken of Himself, and His Church, and His death, and the way of His followers. He had startled His disciples by His disclosures, and had terrified them by His imperative appeals and solemn warnings. They had tempted

Him by their words and looks as their hearts had failed them for fear. He needed to find relief, and reassurance, and reconsecration. He needed the sympathy and presence of those He loved and trusted, as He needed them in Gethsemane. He needed to be reinforced in will for the shame that lay before Him. They needed to see His glory and to be prepared for their part in the coming day. Therefore, He took with Him Peter, and James, and John, and led them up into an high mountain apart.

The third event in the setting of this incident is that He was transfigured while He prayed. This element of the experience we can understand. No one of us ever prayed as Jesus prayed. We are all poor, fearful, darkened, sinful beings in the presence of God. We never have had Christ's perfect trust, His unclouded assurance, His undimmed vision of God. Yet we understand how a man may be transfigured as he prays. His whole inner being will become illuminated, and the sheen of it will be seen in his face. "They looked unto Him and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed." As Jesus prayed, and as He yielded Himself up, in this hour of communion with God, to an entire consecration to God's will, the inner ecstasy of His spirit shone out, not only in the radiance of His face, but also in the lustre of the tabernacle of His flesh. The face of Moses shone with so heavenly a light that he was compelled to veil it when he came down from his mount. The face of Stephen was like the

face of an angel as he stood in his holy place. All faces shine when they lose themselves in the rapture of prayer. It is no marvel that Christ's face was transfigured and His raiment shone on this night of high communion with God.

One other circumstance must not be overlooked. We touch the difficult and the wonderful when we read that Moses and Elias stood with Him while He was transfigured, and when we read, with shy and questioning thoughts, of the voice that spoke out of the cloud. We make this wondrous thing no easier for ourselves when we suggest that the two Old Testament saints appeared only in vision, and that the voice was merely a silent utterance to the soul. These are miracles of the Spirit as marvellous as the simple appearing of those two saints of the Old Testament time. But, letting this point remain, as it must remain, undetermined, no one who has really prayed, even in our poor, trembling and halting way, will fail to understand it. Have you not been conscious of the presence of others with you in your still hour of communion? Have not the dead, the men and women whom you have counted dearer than kin, stood beside you? Have you not heard the voice which spoke to you, and gave you assurance that God was your Father, and that in that hour you were accepted in the beloved? Your dead were held by the chill hand of death. They had passed to that bourne whence no traveller returns. Their voices will never again fall upon the earthly

air, and God is not moved to break His great silence excepting towards His only begotten Son. But these dim and merely human felicities of your hour of prayer will help you to understand the setting of this experience of Christ, when Moses and Elias stood with Him and God spoke out in His joy, "This is My beloved Son, hear Him."

II. In the second place, *the significance of the Transfiguration to Christ.*

A clear view of the setting of this incident will help us to understand its meaning. But its supreme moment is not reached till we have passed into its secret. There are two circumstances which, like the pointers to the pole star, lead our eyes into its meaning for Christ. One of these is the conversation which took place between Jesus and Moses and Elias. "They spake," Luke tells us, "of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." To them the engrossing wonder was not the shining glory of Christ's face; it was His cross and shame. And the second circumstance is the suddenness with which the whole scene vanished. The cloud came down; the voice rang out in the stillness. "Suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only, with themselves." The glory of the shining face and the radiant garment have passed away. Heaven and its saints and its voices have vanished. There is only the bare hilltop, and Jesus and these three fishermen

disciples at His feet. Now, put these two circumstances together—the fact that the subject which held Christ's thoughts was His death, and the fact that suddenly, as the climax of the story, the light and the glory and the heavenly visitants vanish—and a great light, I think, falls upon the significance of this experience. We see that Jesus was again tempted to refuse His cross, to escape His death and His shame, and to pass with Moses and Elias into that glory He had with the Father before the world was. But once again, in this high moment, He accepted the cup and turned His face to Calvary.

What did this acceptance of death, even the death of the Cross, mean to Jesus? What is death? The Scriptures, with one voice, from Genesis to Revelation declare that death is the wages of sin. Had there been no sin, then there would have been no death for man.¹ We let ourselves think that men would have died, whether sin had entered the world or not. We think that as a clock runs down, or as a tree decays and rots, or as the longest lived animal comes, at last, to its hour of dying, so man, even if sinless, would have suffered the change we call death. But this way of thinking rests on the fallacy that man is only a natural being. He is a spiritual creation. He was made a living soul. For man there should be no such thing as death. Even when he dies he passes through an experience which

¹ Cf. Orr, *Christian View of God and the World*, pp. 229-233.

is desecrated, if it be thought of as the death of an animal. "By sin death entered the world. By sin death keeps its dominion." It is therefore of vital significance that these two men who appeared with Jesus and talked with Him had not tasted the common pangs of death. Moses went up into the mount to meet with God, and no man ever saw his grave. Elijah went up in a chariot of fire, and no man wept over his bier. They walked with God and they were not, for God took them. They passed from life to life, and did not see death. Here, then, was Jesus. He had grown in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. The prince of this world had come and found nothing in Him. This was the testimony to Him, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." If Moses might fall asleep in God's arms, if Elijah might pass up through the open heavens in God's chariot, surely that Son of God, who did always those things that pleased Him, need not cross the chilling river of death. I see Jesus standing right before heaven's gate. A single step will take Him within. Death, whose power is given by sin, cannot bar His way. Never was He so near the home of His desire. But, had He joined hands with Moses and Elias and gone back with them to the presence of God, He would have left behind Him a world of sinners unredeemed. He would have gone alone. He would have put on a crown

without a jewel. "We behold Him," writes one of the seers of the New Testament, as if he were recalling this hour, "who hath been made, for a little while, lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God He might taste death for every man." Christ turns back from the house of God and the gate of heaven to go down again to the sin and pain and suffering of the world, and to bear the penalty of death. It is in that moment, when Christ has made again His great renunciation, that suddenly the glory is gone and He is left alone with the men whom He shall redeem.

Is there even in Christ's life a greater hour than this? I do not forget His manger-cradle in Bethlehem, or the waters of His baptism, or the wilderness of His temptation, or the appealing voices which called to Him to please Himself and to please men all through His ministry. But to choose shame and death when heaven's open gate tempted Him—that seems to me the supreme triumph in Christ's temptation. Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter that he might suffer affliction with the people of God. Jonathan bade David and his fellowship farewell that he might die by his father's side. Mary refused her wedding song that she might chant the Magnificat. Among ourselves one man has refused a career of high and honourable ambition that he might provide

for others dependent on him; another has turned aside from a scholar's attainments that he might fulfil life's daily drudgery; another has left his homeland, and his home-life, and his home-love that he might keep his vows of service to Christ among the heathen. These all attain to the first three. But here is One who stands above them all. Here is Jesus, refusing the peace and the joy and the presence of God, what each one of these others gained, that He might go back to the sin of man and the shame of their death, and pass to an hour when He would cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" When this choice has been made, the glory fades, and Christ comes back to a grey and cheerless world, with His face set stedfastly to go to Jerusalem.

III. In the third place, *the message of the Transfiguration.*

I do not ask what are the lessons we may learn from it. These bear in upon every solemn spiritual experience, and every high moment of communion with God. But this incident of the Transfiguration pours its teaching into a single truth. That is the costliness of Christ's passion for souls. What else is impressed upon us from this story of One who has reached the zenith of His life and stands before the open door of heaven, with His heart aflame with desire for the presence and fellowship of God, who, nevertheless, turns His back upon

it and comes back to the ways of men? There is one truth we never wholly believe or entirely trust, and that is the love of God in Christ toward us. We can believe that a father would not count the richness and refinement of the most splendid home a place of desire if the son whom he loved were lost and cast away in some mean house within the shadow of its walls. We can understand that a mother would not care to move among a company eager to pay her honour if her daughter were shambling past its doors a thing of shame. We can believe that there are loyal hearts who do not count their lives dear to them that they may lead others into light and peace. But what we do find it difficult to believe, and what all hear unmoved, is that Christ would not, and did not, seize the opportunity to go back to all His spirit cried out for, that He might redeem Peter, and James, and John, and you, and me, from our sin. Here, as we see the costliness of the sacrifice, we may understand the strength of His passion. And when we remember to what Jesus came back, we can count the cost of it with more discernment. Our home missionaries tell us that they are often weary of the foulness of thought, the baseness of life, the seemingly hopeless dishonesty, and the awful depth of ungodly desire, which are the common features of many whom they seek to win to a better life. Our foreign missionaries tell us, as they sit by our firesides, that there are scenes they daily witness of which they would

be ashamed to speak. They do not write of ^{is}, first, in their reports. They do not breathe then ^{ily}, the they speak to the most eager hearts in the hon They make long years of sacrifice to remove children out of the reach of these sights and sounds that daily afflict them. They fear lest even their little child shall look into the awful abyss of the heart and the ways of these darkened natures. They themselves sometimes grow sick in spirit as they face the stupor of mind, the crafty and the cunning malice, and the almost ineradicable lust of these unchristianised men. But they turn and look at Christ. They see Him refusing heaven for earth, and the swift passage to the Father's communion for the outcastness and desolation of His cross, and they understand the costliness of His passion for souls. They turn again to their service. Shall not we also turn with them? "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." "God commendeth His love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

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XIV

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF MAN

“And as He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistening.”—LUKE ix. 29.

IN one sense the Transfiguration of Christ rises into a plane of thought and feeling beyond our power to enter. No other son of man was, or ever shall be, transfigured as was the Lord. No other ever reached manhood without a sting of memory or a qualm of regret. No other ever kept the faith with a clear vision and an unbroken victory. No other ever lived under the sure and constant sense that this world was but his Father's footstool, and the world unseen his Father's house. Yet we must not forget that the Transfiguration was a wholly human experience. It was as human as His hunger, or His weariness, or the accents of His voice in prayer, or His trembling under temptation. Because it is so entirely human it is possible for us to understand its significances, to pass through it each in his own measure, and to enter into its felicity and reward. Let us take this costly and crowning and exalting experience of Christ, and mark how it can be

repeated in men. We take two divisions, first, the condition of transfiguration; and secondly, the phases of transfiguration.

I. In the first place, *the condition of transfiguration*.

"As He prayed the fashion of His countenance was altered." The condition of spiritual transfiguration is prayer. There are other exalting and even ecstatic experiences of the heart, other illuminings of the face which are reached without prayer. All emotion which is stirred by high purpose and by absorbing thought throbs within the spirit and shines out in the face. The poet's rapture, the artist's dream of loveliness, the orator's passion, even the skilled workman's fine ideal of form and colour cherished as he uses his tool, lend a glow to the heart and a lustre to the eyes. But these move only in the outer courts of the nature of man. What transfigures his whole being and transforms his spirit, and lights up his face with a sheen that abides, is that converse and supplication and adoring reverence of the soul which we call prayer.

Now what is prayer? Few of us are willing to think of prayer merely as the repetition of the few words, too often hurried, too often unmeaning, and sometimes even vacant, which we utter morning by morning and night by night. These have their value. God is not unmindful even of the bowed head and the remembered act of devotion, although

the throb of quick and eager feeling be too often absent from it. But that is not the prayer which transfigures. Nor must we think of prayer only in the terms of the old Puritan definition in the time-honoured Shorter Catechism. "Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies." The Shorter Catechism falls strangely below the level of its high and noble thought in dealing with prayer. Prayer is more than petition, and confession, and thanksgiving. There is an ascent in prayer from court to court, until we reach the holiest of all. The outer court is this offering up of desire. It is seen in Hannah, moaning out her request beside the altar; in David, lying all night on the ground when the Lord had struck his child; in Hezekiah, crying from his sick-bed. It is seen in a nobler fashion when we beseech God for His best gifts, or intercede for those who have been unkind and ungentle and scornful; or, in a still better mind, pray that His kingdom may come, and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Many of the poignant psalms of the Old Testament, and most of the cherished hymns of the Christian faith, are simply the outpouring of desire. As we sing them, in the power of God's Spirit, the fire burns within, and its hallowed flame is kindled in our faces.

But prayer should pass from this court of the

Gentiles, where desires are offered up to God, to a place of closer communion. Communion is that quiet, intimate, tender intercourse with God in which we may ask nothing, confess nothing, and cease even from thanksgiving. We simply speak face to face with God as a man speaks to his friend. Communion may pass beyond speech into a calm and absorbing and yet strangely wakeful silence. God is not content always with silence only. He loves, I truly believe, to hear the human voice rising and falling in the accents of prayer. Samuel's childish treble when he cried, "Speak, Lord! for Thy servant heareth," was sweeter to Him than the perfect music of a boy's clear young voice in a choir to its leader. God misses "His little human praise," with its doubt and fear trembling in every tone, when we pray only with the inner whisper of our thought and meditation. But there are times when the spirit of prayer may be too swift and too tender for words. Every man is a possible mystic in the best sense of that word, for every man may enter into that intercourse with God in which the hours pass by in the silence of a perfect confidence. Wesley, in his Journal, tells us again and again that when worn and ill he cast himself without words on the bosom of God. Chalmers declares that, when greatly wearied and distressed in mind, he gave himself up to quietism, and was much refreshed. These were both men of strong practical wisdom, and not moody and dreamy recluses. We

must not think that when Christ continued "all night in prayer to God" He stretched out the arms of His petitions and thanksgiving in words which fell upon His own ear. We can be sure that His time was passed in still meditation. He rose into a rapture in which there was no speech, a silence that was felt and loved of God. To Him the Father was—

"A presence felt the livelong day,
A welcome fear at night."

The prayer of desire transfigures with a pale gleam compared with the glow of the prayer of communion. When men *look* unto God they are lightened.

But there is a height in prayer above communion. What shall I call it? It may be named the prayer of surrender. Very few ever utter that prayer to its utmost syllable. Few ever really lay themselves, spirit and soul and body, on God's altar. We are always withholding something, keeping back from God some dear and cherished possession, some gift or talent or power, some love or pleasure or passion. We will not yield up some one dear and tightly held joy. Yet when we do pray this prayer we pass on to an experience, which seals us with a seal that cannot be broken, to the service of God for ever. Then on the transparent mirror of the face the light leaps and flashes, and some of it abides. That is the secret of that heavenly and almost intolerable

radiance on the face of Moses which men feared to look upon. He had come out of that most holy place and offered up his prayer of surrender in those solemn words, "But if not . . . blot out my name from Thy book." That is why Stephen's face shone in the council. His clear and discerning mind saw his martyr death before him, and he yielded himself up to God's will. Could we have seen Paul's face when he heard God's words, "My grace is sufficient for thee," and meekly accepted God's will, we would have seen the sheen of the transfiguring light also upon it. He did not know whether he was "in the body" or "out of it." That is why Christ's face shone as He prayed. And that is how our faces also shall be transfigured.

II. Look, in the second place, at *the phases of the transfiguration of man*.

Transfiguration has not only its source and its condition; it has its history, and its times and seasons. The transfiguration of a man is a gradual, a deepening, and at last an unfading and eternal beauty.

The first phase is *the transfiguration of the soul*. In those hours of absorbing emotion, in desire and communion and surrender, God's spirit works in upon the soul. By a spiritual law they react upon the whole inner core of our being, on mind and heart and will, and these are transformed. This subjective blessing of prayer, the cleansing and

renewing of the soul while we pray, is not the only, not the supreme answer to prayer; but it is the first, the immediate, and the most enduring answer we can receive; it is the answer which is never denied. No man ever prayed but in the moment he was a better and a wiser man. To go into the sanctuary of God is to understand. To let our requests be made known unto God is to gain the peace that passeth all understanding. As we pray our sins are set in the light of God's countenance. We see the beauty of holiness. We behold the beauty of the Lord. We open the sluice-gates of the soul, and the swelling tides of God's love and grace flood within. New penitences, new resolves, new endeavours are born in the depth of the will. That truth is written large in the history of every saint. Prayer is a mode of power within to learn the mind of Christ. His words and deeds become memorable and significant to us. We sometimes receive a more vivid insight into what He was, and did, as we serve Him in the toilsome duties of life. But when we pray, then those spiritual changes, which are vital, determining, eternal, take place within. F. W. H. Myers, in his poem on St. Paul, so full of the seer's insight into the history of the soul, has set this truth in impassioned verse. He is speaking of Paul's shame at his failure, and he conceives Paul in the pain of his penitence, seeking the presence and the peace of Christ.

"Straight to Thy presence get me and reveal it,
 Nothing ashamed of tears upon Thy feet,
 Show the sore wound, and beg Thine hand to heal it,
 Pour Thee the bitter, pray Thee for the sweet.

Then, with a ripple and a radiance thro' me,
 Rise and be manifest, O Morning Star !
 Flow on my soul, Thou Spirit, and renew me,
 Fill with Thyself, and let the rest be far."

The second phase is *the transfiguration of the face*. The face is the involuntary and, at the last, the accurate index of the soul. A man may smile, and smile, and be a villain, through a few years of his life. But in the end, let him pose and posture and dissemble as he will, what he has become in his soul is seen on his face. As surely as the sap wells up in the stem, and bursts out into leaf and blossom, and as certainly as the acid in a man's blood will be seen in the scab upon his skin, the passion of his soul renewed in hours of consecration will become the light and the line which all men's eyes can see. Art has, as might be expected, given this truth a varied expression. To portray the human face is always the highest reach of the painter's power. There were two faces which the great artists of the Middle Ages held it to be their just ambition to represent. One was the face of Christ. But that face was as a rule the artist's despair. The other face was that of the Madonna Mary, the Virgin of Nazareth. These mediæval artists sought far and near for faces of perfect beauty as models for their portraits. They looked into every young face in

the hope that the ideal in line and form and colour would be found. One can see in all the galleries of the Continent those pictures of radiant youth and dazzling bloom. But the nobler minds soon passed beyond the thrall of those faultless faces with their dimpled beauty and their earthly charm. They began to search after something more lovely and more significant than skin-deep loveliness. They began to discern that the face of some simple peasant girl, marked by no unusual grace of contour or of colouring, could wear a glory which earth could not give. They marked that her daily prayer before the cross had schooled her soul to God's discipline and enriched it with God's grace. So Raphael painted as his Madonnas a simple peasant girl, with motherhood's human yearning in her eyes, and the pale austerity of consecration matching her white stole, and the mark of her rapt and adoring humility manifest in the grace and sweetness of her air. They realised that when the soul had become transfigured the light in the temple of God shone through.

A finer exposition of this truth than art can give is to be found in the records of missionary service. Every traveller in heathen lands is struck by the heathen face. They speak of the dull, apathetic, lustreless Chinaman, in whom emotion, unless it be the uprising of some gust of passion, is almost never seen; of the keen-eyed Japanese, with a wholly earthly gleam in the glance of his otherwise passive

face ; of the proud, and secretive, and sensual look of the Brahmin. They have marked the gross and brutish countenances of the African, and the animal greed which is imprinted on the very lips of the South Sea Islander, and stamped on the poor bleared faces of those decaying races which are the victims of their hates and lusts. But let the Gospel of the redeeming love of Christ be preached to them. Let that change we call "the new birth" pass within their soul. Let grace begin to rule in their hearts. Their ungodly passions are cast out. They begin to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Then as they pray, as they become eager with desire and absorbed in communion, and at last devoted in surrender, the fashion of their countenance is altered, and they shine with new light. For a man to pass into a meeting of renewed heathen out of the streets of a Chinese city, or from amidst the thronged ways of an Indian village, is to see at a glance that the transfigured soul has been expressed in the transfigured face. Whenever we see an old face shining with that meek and wistful and spiritual beauty which the fairest youth has never borne, we are able to say, as the young girl said of her mother, "She has prayed much."

The third phase is *the transfiguration of the life*. "His raiment was white and glistening." We read these words with a little wonder and more doubt. We are tempted to think that they are a note of exaggeration in the report. We wonder if the

white snow of the Hermon Hill above them had not dazzled their eyes. But quite apart from the fact that the radiance of the face would steal down and illumine Christ's white robe, this statement is a hint and a prophecy of a vital truth. The transfiguration of the soul within is seen not only in the shining of the face, but it begins to transform and to ennoble the very habit of the life. It is nothing marvellous to us that after years of devotion and long continuing in hours of prayer and the renewing of the mind from day to day, the clothes a man wears proclaim the transfiguring power of the Spirit of God. Although not suddenly and in a moment, yet surely and with increasing beauty, all life is transfigured. A man's look, his courtesies of speech and of gesture, his walk and poise, his ways and customs, his gifts and services, the very furnishing of his home and all the habits of his life, become beautiful. Old age is not always sweet and kindly and gracious. It is sometimes crabbed, exacting, selfish, exhausting even the patience of those who love. Many old faces have hard lines, grim angles, cold and cruel aspects. They reflect what the man has become in soul. They are the faces of men who are self-centred, unloving, and unhelpful. They reveal to every eye the fact that the man lives without prayer. But when life is increasingly and more deeply prayer, when, in desire for things good and true and beautiful, in communion with the God of our life, in surrender

after surrender, the soul is transfigured, then we see not only the shining face but the raiment white and glistening. Newman has told this story in three impressive verses—

“I saw thee once, and nought discern’d
For stranger to admire ;
A serious aspect, but it burn’d
With no unearthly fire.

Again I saw, and I confess’d
Thy speech was rare and high ;
And yet it vex’d my burden’d breast,
And scared, I knew not why.

I saw once more, and awestruck gazed
On face, and form, and air ;
God’s living glory round thee blazed
A Saint—a Saint was there !”

This transfiguration of man shall not be completed here and now. If indeed we prayed Christ’s great prayers, if only we were as often in His presence as we might be, what men call miracles might be worked within and without. Paul has set the method of our transfiguration in a single massive sentence, “But we all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” John has told us that when our transfiguration shall have no flaw, “We shall see Him and we shall be like Him.” Meanwhile this is the truth, which rebukes and ashames us, that we might wear more of His glory than we do if only we would pray. Our faces would shine, and our raiment would become white and glistening.

XV

A CONVERSATION ON DEATH

“They spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.”—LUKE ix. 31.

“Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.”—JOHN xi. 11.

“I go unto the Father.”—JOHN xiv. 28.

CHRIST’S master word was life, not death. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,” sums up Christ’s final purpose. But when Moses and Elias came forth from within the veil their conversation was on death. What was said it would be irreverent even to attempt to conjecture. This only is clear, that Christ’s dying was the event of mightiest moment in the minds of Moses and Elias, and the most signal service Christ had to render to man. We shall endeavour to enter into the spirit with which they view death, and try to realise why the decease at Jerusalem was so engrossing to Jesus and His heavenly visitors.

I. Look, to begin with, at *death in the light of nature*.

Death in the light of nature is the extinction of the vital spark. It is, in the language of the biologist, the failure to correspond with the environment, and therefore the close of life. Against that dark conclusion most men have made their protest. They have refused to believe that when the last breath has been given there was nothing left but a little red clay. Sometimes, under the influence of the nobler thinkers of men, they have been assured that death does not end all, and they have clung to that hope with a stubborn tenacity, even when confident voices have denied it. Every man has the instinctive feeling that he is not merely a part of nature, but that there is something more awful and more mysterious in the death of a man who has loved and hoped than in the death of an animal. Every man who has lived until he was sixty years of age feels the deep assurance that life has not been large enough for his capacities, not full enough for his possibilities. He has an outward man which perishes, but an inward man which may be renewed day by day. He thinks of himself as an exile of eternity.

For that reason he has been eager to seize every hint and probability which nature could give him to prove that life survives the grave. He marks the seed rising out of corruption into newness of life. He looks at the dragon-fly flashing its spangled wings in the summer light, and remembers that it came out of the worm that lay so long inert in the

slime of the pool. He sees the night banished by the dawn, and winter passing into spring. Under the influence of these thoughts within and these signs without, and under the still stronger suggestions of tender memory and deathless love, he has been assured that life persists in a world beyond. The savage buried his dead with his spear and drinking-cup beside him, that he might resume the chase in the happy hunting-grounds beyond. The more cultured pagan, even when he carved the down-turned torch on the stone that marked the grave of his dead, conceived for himself those fields of asphodel in which his dear ones walked, and among whose meadows they found peace. Eurydice dies, and yet Orpheus is assured that she lives, and loves, and remembers, and can he but touch the hearts of the keepers of the gates he will win her back to earth again. Socrates in the *Phædo*, awaiting his cup of hemlock, conducts the noblest, and loftiest, and most appealing argument which has ever comforted the hearts of men who have kept the last watch together, with only the dim light of nature in their minds. Yet all these hints and probabilities avail us nothing when we face the thought of the masses who have lived and died, and the grip death has on all that we have known. In the light of nature, a man can only say in sadness with Professor Clifford—

“I was not, I lived, I loved,
I did a little work ; I am not.”

II. Look at *death in the light of the Old Testament Revelation.*

We enter a different realm of thought when we open the Hebrew Bible. Despite all the resemblances and correspondences, which archæologists and antiquarians are eager to find between the Hebrew conceptions of a life beyond, and that of other peoples, the difference between them is radical. It is held and expressed in the one word—God. The Old Testament message can be set down in a single line. It is the declaration of the being, and mind, and will, and heart of an invisible, eternal, and only wise God. As the Hebrew seers, and prophets, and psalmists became sure of a personal God, who was a faithful Creator, they became sure that death did not end all. Whenever they lost the clear vision of God, and whenever they began to doubt God's love and care, then the world beyond the grave faded from their minds, or became a grim and cheerless land of shadows. Job cries in his day of doubt, "If a man die shall he live again?" and, though he sees the tree sprouting with the returning spring, he has no assurance for himself. "Man lieth down and riseth not." Hezekiah turns his face to the wall, in the bitterness of a certainty that death quenches all light and joy and service. The Psalmist on his sick-bed moans, "For in death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?" But as often as God became a clear

certainly, and God's love a sure delight, the Hebrew heart became confident that death was not the loss of life and love and fellowship, but the passing to the presence of God. The songs of the Hebrew saints are almost as jubilant as the hymns of Christian believers who look forward to seeing His face. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell. In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures for ever more." "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." The New Testament teacher who has interpreted the genius and the hope of his race has engrossed this passionate belief in a single statement. He explains the whole course of Hebrew thought and history when he writes, "They desire a better country, even a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath provided for them a city." Yet not all the Hebrews could rest in this hope. Not every Jewish heart could keep this confidence. When Jesus came there were the Sadducees, who calmly said that there was no resurrection, who mocked at the thought of Abraham's bosom. If there was a world beyond it was a world uncertain and unexplored. Death was still the unconquered enemy.

III. Look at *death in the light of Christ's teaching.*

We stand now upon a height that overlooks a new world. One far-reaching conception given us by Jesus altered the whole outlook. Up to the time of Christ all men had thought that there were two worlds—one of earth, and sea, and sky, of clasping hands and loving hearts; and another into which men pass at death, chill, cheerless, robbed, at its best, of much that made life glad. But with Jesus there are not two worlds, but one. Heaven is God's seat. Earth is His footstool. All the universe of created things is His Father's house. "In My Father's house are many rooms." Earth with its green meadows, and steadfast hills, and shining stars, is only one room in the Father's house. There may be, and most likely are, many rooms in God's spacious creation. Heaven, with its unseen and unknown and eternal beauty, is another room in the Father's house. There is a life to be lived with the Father here. There is a life to be lived with the Father there. What, then, was death to Jesus? Dying might mean pain, and tears, and sorrow, and loneliness, and loss to those who are left behind. Dying had its torment because of sin, but dying ought to be but the passing from one room to another. When Jesus would die, when He would not pass, as He might have passed, through the gate which was never closed to Him, but through the dreadful avenue of death, He would go to prepare the room for us. Death is not the close of life.

It is only the putting off of the garment of that mortality which we wear in the room called earth, and the putting on of that robe of immortality which we shall wear in the room named heaven.

Now mark how Jesus gives His sanction and seal to this great article of His teaching by the figures He uses. He has three names for death. He calls it a *falling asleep*. He is using one of the phrases which daring and trustful men had coined, and He is giving it proof and reality. When He stands beside the bed of Jairus' little daughter He softly says, "Talitha cumi," "My little lambie, arise." He is awaking a child from sleep. When He stops the bier of the widow of Nain's son He calls, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." He is calling one who is at rest back to active life again. When He stands at the tomb of Lazarus, dead four days ago, He cries, "Lazarus, come forth." He is calling one who is lying in the rest chamber to the light of the day and its duties. As a little child will come in from its play when the shadows fall; as a man seeks his rest when his day's toil is done; as a traveller weary and footsore will lie down to renew himself at his journey's end; so, said Jesus, when we die, we sleep. But we sleep to wake.

He calls it a *going to the Father*. This is the word which remained unspoken until the end, but it was His most cherished thought. When He gathers His disciples together in the upper room, and He is upon the eve of His dying, then the word

is like a refrain in a song, a recurring note of music in His addresses. Again and again He repeats, "I go to My Father." He is like an emigrant who has been for years in another hemisphere and in the land of strangers. He has been busy with its life and its industries. He has endured its hardships and isolation. Now the time of His sojourn is over and the hour of His return is come. He is going to the Father. He is going home.

He calls it, in this conversation, by a singular word. "They spake of His decease." In the literal and significant meaning of the word it was His "exodus." We cannot doubt why the word was chosen. It is the thought of death from the point of view of one who is about to go out by it as by a door. How full of light is this word. Death is an exodus, a going out from the land of the stranger, from the house of bondage, from affliction and thankless toil, from the state of the slave. Death is a deliverance and a boon. It is a going through a wilderness, with its loneliness and its pain and privation, but it is a going through a wilderness upon a journey which is to end in the land which is the promise of God.

"They talked with Him of His exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Why did they talk with Him of this exodus? They had come to strengthen His hand in God. Death might have been for Him merely a falling asleep and a going to the Father. It might have been a quiet passing to

God, as it was with Moses, whose grave no man found. It might have been a triumphant translation, as it was with Elijah when he went home to God. But Christ did not mean to accomplish His exodus and leave no way behind Him for other men's feet to travel. He went up through the great wilderness, and crossed the Jordan, that all, who will, may follow in His steps. He tasted death not for Himself only but for every man. He did not therefore really fall asleep, or pass in swift ease to His Father. He accomplished His exodus.

IV. In the fourth place: *death in the light of Christ's resurrection.*

The complete message of Christ about death is not to be found in any word. Death might have been for Christ a falling asleep and a going to the Father and an exodus, and yet remain for men the last enemy. We might still have buried our dead with a sorrow which has no hope. We should still have been left with that sad-eyed remembrance of those we have loved, and that sombre thought that we should live again only in the memory of those who knew us, and in lives made better by our presence. Although a man believes in God, he is not always able to believe that such as he is, with his brief span of years, his obscure life, his rushlight vitality, shall pass to a life which is eternal. The immortality of man is not secured by the thought that man is a spirit. The immortality of man is not involved in the bare thought of God.

That is no guarantee for immortality. The immortality of man is not made a certainty because Jesus lived and died and left behind Him His message that death was a falling asleep, a going to the Father, and an exodus. Paul's clear thought tore the mask from that groundless hope when he wrote, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable." The immortality of man is a certainty only when we are assured that God is love, from whom neither life nor death can separate us, and of whom we can be assured that He will not let us go. Immortality is a certainty only when we know that He, who loved us and gave Himself for us, was not holden by the cords of death, but rose again triumphant from the grave. What Jesus did for death by His resurrection has been set in one shining sentence. "He hath abolished death, and brought to light immortality and life through the Gospel." He hath abolished death! That is to say He hath made death nothing. He has made death no longer a thing to be feared, though men still shrink from its darkness, and weakness, and pain. He has made death to be not simply a falling asleep, a going to the Father, and an exodus, but, what it was for Himself, a *gate* through which we shall pass into the city of God.

To this thought of death and to the revelation given of it by Christ there are three diverse attitudes. One of these is the attitude of *indifference*. Youth is busy with the laughter and song of

life, eager with its enlarging interests, and allured by the years which seems to stretch out in a long and enchanted vista. Middle age is absorbed in its getting and spending, engrossed in the cares of this world and burdened by responsibilities. Old age shrinks from even the thought of death, and strangely turns away its eyes from this solemn certainty. Even when some other is called away, and the passing bell is heard, the old view death with a quiet apathy. Apart from these indifferences of all men, at various ages, the world beyond is unreal to many men. It baffles the most adventurous imagination to conceive it. The thought of it lies like a dread on the minds of others. I question if the craving for a personal immortality is so keen as once it was. There are many for whom the thought of death as the extinction of life is almost a relief. There is an increasing number who are quite willing to acquiesce in a message which has no promise of immortal years. They seem to derive from this thought of the blank that follows upon dying an impulse towards virtue in the days they live under the sun. Matthew Arnold expresses their mind in his agnostic word—

“Is there no second life? Pitch this life high.”

But for most men who are either engrossed in the things of time, or are enveloped in a haze which blots out the other shore, the attitude towards death is indifference. They fear dying with the instinctive

fear of all living things. They dread its pain. They have anguish because of what they may lose, and others may suffer. But to death itself they are indifferent.

A second attitude is *wistfulness*. Few men can maintain a placid indifference. A man might be content with this life if he had never suffered, and never felt its inequalities and injustices to be at variance with a moral ideal. A man might school his heart to accept his short span of years as a complete and rounded term, if he had never loved, and never prayed, and never had an experience of a peace and a joy and a fellowship which earth and time cannot satisfy. When we dig our children's graves, when we lose those who have loved us and taught us God, we grow wistful about death and its issues. We understand why Huxley turned from indifference to wistfulness at the end. We think more tenderly of the man who, with years of unfaltering denial behind him, yet bade them carve on his tombstone these lines written by his wife—

“Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep,
For still He giveth His beloved sleep,
And if an endless sleep He wills, so best.”

That is not the Christian hope. It is, as his son says, a robust conviction that life in itself is well worth living. But it is something more. It is an assurance that God is, and a wistfulness born of the thought of the loved ones who weep for a life to come.

The third attitude is *faith*. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." That clear voice of faith has never been silent since the first eyes saw the empty tomb. As often as men are assured that Jesus rose from the dead, and walked in the garden, and was seen of men, and has gone to prepare a room for them, they will, like Paul, "unmoor" their boat with cheerfulness. For they know that, though the mist hangs over the river, and the other side has never shown its green fields to them, there is One who awaits them there. "To depart and to be with Christ is far better." A conversation on death is a different thing to us from what it was to Socrates. Christ sits with every company of His people. He does not set His palm over His dim eyes to see whether He can descry any sign of a life beyond, as Socrates did. He says with the assurance of one who has known, and has now made the way clear, "Let not your hearts be troubled," "In My Father's house are many mansions."

XVI

THE BLESSED DEAD

“And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.”—MATT. xvii. 3.

THERE are few to-day who doubt the continuity of life in some world beyond. In our intense and engrossing daily struggle it often fades out of our mind. But whenever we are called to pause by some one's death, or whenever we ask any of the great questions of being and well-being, or when we think of the soul, we have an inward conviction that death is nothing more than a great change. Even science has now added its voice to those who deny that there is such an event as death. The lower forms of life, we are told, never die. They only put off one body to be clothed upon with another. The intimations of our immortality may seem indistinct and unassuring. Yet as often as we realise the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and enter into all that it implies, we are ready to sing again with Isaac Watts—

“There is a land of pure delight
Where saints immortal reign,
Infinite day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.”

But when we pass from this invincible conviction of a life beyond to think of the state of the dead, a haze falls upon our minds and our hearts are troubled. We are not helped by any of the confident pictures which daring fancy has drawn of the state of those whom God has taken. We are not held either by the heaven or the hell which grim and confident theologies once fastened on men's minds. They have become incredible, even to our children. We revolt against that Romish conception which makes it only a more lofty cathedral, whose air is heavy with incense, whose thrones are occupied by saints, whose worshippers lie in prostrate adoration before God. We protest against a purgatory of which Jesus never spoke, and Paul never dreamed. As decisively we refuse those mischievous and wilful assertions of inventive superstition. We deplore that spiritualism, so often self-deceived, which plays upon the credulity of the ignorant, and exploits the fears of the timid, and the yearning of the bereaved. We read, without conviction, the reports of the Society for Psychical Research, so eager to catch on its lens any rays of light from the world beyond. If we were left to such signs and proofs as these reverent and sensitive, but over-wistful, inquirers give, we should be compelled to become agnostic. Our one resource would be to throw ourselves into the activities of the world we know, and bar the way of our thoughts towards a world unknown.

We need not be led aside into bewildering mazes, nor need we allow our hearts to be robbed of their confidence and of their peace. Christ has spoken to us of the dead. He has not told us anything to gratify mere curiosity. He has drawn the veil closely so that no prying eyes shall see what there is no need to see. But He has told us enough to comfort and to gladden us, and He has lodged in His own resurrection and in His promises some great certainties concerning the blessed dead.

I. Mark, to begin with, *Christ's clear testimony to a conscious life in the world beyond.*

Very obvious is Christ's reticence about the details of that life beyond. He spoke with a reserve we shall do well to remember, of its judgments and penalties. He painted no picture of its scenery. But heaven was a room in His Father's great house, and a place prepared for those who had lived, and toiled, and loved, and trusted, in the room and state of earth below. He lived looking up into heaven all His life through. Its gates were ever open to Him, so that He might have passed within them when He would. Its angels hovered over Him. Its voices called to Him out of the cloud. The hope of its blessedness was often on his lips. These truths shine out on every page of the story. But there are three occasions on which He spoke with emphasis. In the words to the dying thief, "To-day shalt thou be with Me

in Paradise," Jesus set His seal to the conception that death is only a gate to a life to come, a life of fellowship and felicity. In the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus He makes a larger declaration. He draws a picture of life, and thought, and desire, in the world beyond. We must not extract reality out of its scenery, or doctrine out of its details. But when we discount all that belongs to the mere framework of the parable, there remain solemn certainties on which Jesus laid emphasis and stress. We are told that men in the world beyond have the pleasures and the pains of memory, that they sorrow, and joy, and hope, and love, and pity, and that they recognise familiar faces and are moved by piteous fears. There is a more illuminating and more assuring evidence in this appearing of Moses and Elias talking with Him. Whether we are willing to believe it to be an actual sight of the two prophets of Israel, or only a vision conjured up before the eyes of excited men, the truths it conveys remain as emphatic. These truths are that there are inhabitants of a world beyond; that they have a knowledge of what is passing among men; that their hopes and desires are still bent on the victory of that kingdom of God for which they lived; and that their hearts are filled with a deep concern for those who suffer, and especially for One who was about to die. That interpretation is no narrow exposition of an isolated and mysterious event. It is the confident interpretation of those men who

testified what they had seen, and who lived out sane and sober lives in the equally confident hope that they also would pass to live, and to know, and to love in that world beyond. The expectation of all these apostolic men was no faint outline of a dim world whose joys and whose pursuits were mere conjecture. They were filled with a sense of the reality of future glory. They mused in wistful expectation of the day when the glory should be revealed. They kindled their hopes at the dear promises that they should ever be with the Lord. They were persuaded that they would know Him, and know each other. They were assured that in that Father's house they would enter into a peace and a joy, a largeness of redemption and of life, which were impossible here. That great hope they learned through Christ's clear testimony to a conscious life in the world beyond.

II. Mark, in the second place, *the distinctive truths of Christ's testimony to the conscious life in the world beyond.*

The first truth which appears to be clear is that *those who pass by the gate of death do not return.* We are not unmindful of the three raisings from the dead at the call of Christ when He was upon the earth. But it is only reasonable to regard these as unusual works of His power, as in a line with those other miracles which He worked in the days of His flesh. No others have ever come back, or ever

shall come back, from the world beyond.¹ The dying thief at last sunk into the peace of the dead, and was buried, but did not appear to men. The suggestion, in the parable, that Lazarus might pass from heaven to hell is met with by the word that there is a great gulf fixed. The appeal that he should be sent back to earth, as a witness to the reality and the terribleness of the other world, is as decisively, although more tenderly, refused. Two and two only are represented as coming again to be seen of men, and these are two who had not passed through the gate. It may be true, as Milton sings—

“Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen,
Both when we wake, and when we sleep.”

But they walk not only unseen but unknown. We shall go to them; they shall not return to us.

It is never safe to trust to analogies from nature when speaking of spiritual realities. There is a point at which natural law is not delicate enough and high enough for the spiritual world. But there is an exquisite parable from nature which seems to me both to picture the truth and to enshrine the reason why the dead do not appear to those they love, and why they can make no sign to them. In this parable, which is entitled “Not lost, but gone before,”² the authoress pictures the grub in the

¹ *Note*.—The statement in Matt. xxvii. 52, 53, cannot, I think, standing alone, be depended upon as evidence.

² Cf. Margaret Gatty's *Parables from Nature* (First Series).

slime of the pool as it is soon to be transformed into a dragon-fly. It has come to the day when its great change is about to take place. It feels the impulse to seek the upper world of light and air. It has begun to slough off its coarse envelope. It has found the reed up which it shall climb out of the pool. Its friends gather around the ascending grub and beg from it the promise that, when it has explored the world beyond, it will return and tell its story. If the grub does not return, they will know that the upper world is the land of death. The grub ascends, reaches the upper air, and bursts out into the radiant beauty of the spangled dragon-fly. It has not forgotten its companions at the bottom of the pool. It finds the reed up which it has climbed, but it has passed through so great a change that, at the first touch of the chill water, all within its warm and breathing body starts and recoils as if from death. The world of light and air is now native to it. There is no passing to that lower world. That parable, I believe, holds the truth as to the passing from the world unseen to the world we know. Those who die are not lost. They have only gone before. But they have put on the body of their glory, and they cannot, even though they would, pass again to us. One, and One only, returned. But that One was He who conquered death and brought to light life and immortality.

The second truth which appears to be clear is

that *those who pass by the gate of death are conscious of those who are left behind*. When Dante Gabriel Rossetti painted the picture in which he immortalised his dead wife and declared his undying love for her, he represented her leaning out of a window in heaven over him, as he slept, and awaiting his coming. A greater Dante assured his heart that the Beatrice whom he loved, and of whom he dreamed, was awaiting his coming in the heights to which he would ascend. Even John Bunyan, with his instinctive reserve in regard to the world beyond, declaring that he had only a glimpse within the gates, can write: "Then I saw in my dream that the Shining Men bid them call at the gate; the which, when they did, some looked from above over the gate, to wit, Enoch, Moses, Elijah, and others." The dying thief would remember Christ's look when He leaned out toward him on the cross. The rich man would remember the beggar that lay by his gate. Moses would remember the way of the wilderness. Elijah would remember both Carmel and Horeb. Consciousness cannot exist without memory. But can we not go further and reach this persuasion that those who have gone before not only know, but are aware, of the condition of those they love. St. Bernard, in his lamentation for his brother Girard, refuses to believe that his dear dead only remember and do not know. His lamentation has been sympathetically rendered by Bishop Alexander in his poem "Recognition"—

“Perhaps they say, I pardon thee that wrong—
Nay, love thee more divinely for it all;
Perhaps they strengthen thee when thou art strong,
Perhaps they walk with thee when shadows fall.
But this is all I have for thee; the fair
Absolute certitude is other where.

Nay, that were life which truly liveth not—
Life lower than our life, and not above.
Thou, thou art near to God in thy fair lot;
Nearer to God is full of God’s love—
Fuller of Him who looks on us to bless,
Who is impassible, not compassionless.

Thou carest, though no care can pass thy gate,
And, passioning not, art still compassionate.”¹

That is the truth which is sealed upon our minds by this appearing of Moses and Elijah. They did not only remember, but they knew, and were compassionate for Him who had His decease to accomplish at Jerusalem.

At first sight this truth casts a shadow upon us. It seems to rob the dead of their felicity. But, when we let this thought shadow us, we forget that God sees and knows all, and He remains perfect in His infinite peace; and we forget that those who are gone before see our lives in their wholeness and the events of them in their true quality and significance. To human eyes, the agony of the garden and the long hours of dying on the Cross were awful and intolerable in their agony and shame. Moses and Elias saw the part they were to play in redemption, and they would not have taken them out of the experience of Christ. To

¹ Cf. Bishop Alexander, *The Finding of the Book*, p. 203.

human eyes, and, perhaps, at times to Paul himself, his weakness and weariness, his years in prison, his thorn in the flesh, his martyr death, made up a long misery. Now we see them, as the dead always saw them, as Christ saw them, as Paul himself now looks back upon them, as the hours of his service never to be forgotten. Look back on your own life. It has had its days of sadness, its limitations and mortifications, its poverties and tears. Even yet you cannot see the meaning of them all. But you know enough to say that much you once thought to be evil has been the very pool of healing and the still waters of blessing in your life. Mark this truth as it shines clearly in the experience of another. You know the enrichment which some one of your acquaintance counted a splendid gain, and for which all men praised him. You saw how it coarsened his mind and ensnared his heart. You marked that it took the bloom from his sense of honour, and filled him with a pitiable pride. The things he counted gain you saw to be impoverishing loss. When some sorrow cast its shadow on his path, and trouble fell upon him, so that his eyes were filled with tears and he wondered why it was not with him as in days past and began to go softly, you understood the loving kindness of the Lord. So the dead see. They understand the issue of the chemistry of life. They see not the furnace only, but the fine gold.

There is one pain which mars their peace.

There is one burden they bear. That is the burden that lies upon the heart of God. If the dead, as seems clear, see and know our joy and sorrow, if they can anticipate the cross we have to carry, they also see our sin. That is the sight and knowledge which afflict. The young girl who unexpectedly saw the father whom she revered fall into a strange and degrading sin was dulled in spirit for years, and her face never recovered its open, trustful look. If the dead know, they were aware when you played that dishonest part in business, when you trifled with purity, when you slandered the innocent, when you flashed with a sudden lightning of hate. How that moves those who have gone before, and how it should move us to think of their minds and thoughts I do not know! I do not believe in prayers for the dead, for we do not know their state sufficiently well to pray for them, and I am assured that the living, whose fate hangs in the balance, and especially the unblessed living, need all the energy of prayer at our command. I do not know, for we have no word of guidance, whether the dead pray for us or not. It may be that the golden vial, "full of odours which are the prayers of the saints," hold the intercessions of the blessed living here and the blessed dead yonder. These are things into which no man can enter. But of this I feel assured, that those who love us know when we fall, and that some of the tears that have yet to be wiped away are the tears of grief at our sin.

The third truth which appears to be clear is that *those who pass by the gate of death await the coming of those they love.* That truth is close folded within the heart of every sentence on the lips of Christ and every conviction in the hearts of believers. As surely as the dying thief watched for the coming of Jesus, or as Lazarus entered into the fellowship of Abraham, or as Moses and Elias took part in one communion, or as Paul knew that he would depart and be with Christ, so surely shall we pass to the company of just men made perfect, and to the Lord who is in the midst. That thought is difficult only to our imagination, not to our reason, nor to our faith. Because we cannot throw the picture of an immortal fellowship on the small and wrinkled screen of our imagination, we stumble at the thought. A South Sea Islander, living in one of some twenty huts, cannot conceive of London, with its millions of closely packed lives. It is impossible, he says, with an agnostic smile. Yet London exists, with its vast multitudes, its unity and community, its intense and varied and enthralling life, its dear and tender intimacies, its swift means of intercourse, although the savage cannot realise it. So, while the eye hath not seen nor the ear heard, we find it easily within the scope of a spiritual faith to be assured that those who have gone before await our coming and long for our fellowship.

The consolations of that truth seem to be noble and strong. We shall receive the pardon of those

we have wronged. We shall understand and reciprocate the love of those we have slighted. We shall enter into an unbroken fellowship with those who are our kin in the things of God. David shall not be sundered from Jonathan. Zacchæus shall be pardoned by the widow whom he wronged. The penitent thief shall make amends to the traveller he left wounded by the way. We all shall see and know and love *Him* whom to see and know and love is to enter into His complete likeness, His full knowledge, and His perfect service. Above all, it will make the world beyond our *home*, for it is where we meet those we love, and are loved in return.

XVII

THE CLOISTER AND THE CROWD

“And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here : and let us make three tabernacles ; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.”—MARK ix. 5.

A FEW years ago a distinguished public man, who was also a thoughtful essayist—Arthur Helps—wrote a little volume of reflections on life which he called, *Thoughts in the Cloister and the Crowd*. Its keynote was struck in the opening sentence. “It has been said with some meaning that, if men would but rest in silence, they might always hear the music of the spheres.” But the wise and persuasive sayings, which make up the message of the book, declare that there is a knowledge and a wisdom and a power that cannot be gained in the hours of silence. These thoughts were struck out of the heart of a man who lived strenuously among his fellow-men. He learned that the thoughts of the cloister become corrupt and fanciful unless they are corrected by the experiences of life among the crowd.

That is the truth which fastens on our minds as we read this impetuous outburst of Peter. The

disciples had seen wondrous things. They had seen Christ transfigured. They had looked on the face of Moses shining again with the light of the presence of God. They had marked Elijah's prophetic rapture. They had heard them speak with Jesus. They had been caught up into the third heaven and had heard unspeakable words. Whether they were in the body or out of the body, they could not tell. "They wist not what to say, for they were sore afraid." Peter's awed and amazed mind realises that no spot on earth can be so heavenly as this place, and no experience of time can match its spiritual ecstasy. He breaks out into characteristic speech. "Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." He wished to prolong the conference, to detain the visitors, and to make permanent the glory of Christ. He will build them booths such as men built in the Feast of Tabernacles, and under their shelter the heavenly intercourse shall continue through all the days. In a word, Peter proposed to set up the cloister. He had forgotten the crowd.

Now, that is one of the temptations of every religion. It is the alluring and perilous snare of the more intense natures and the more devout spirits. This craving for the cloister, this deeply rooted superstition that the cloister is the nursery of holiness, has cast its fateful spell over every faith. It is a pitfall for many simple and devoted men

and women. They are continually building their tabernacles in which they are cherishing a cloistered faith and an ascetic piety, forgetting that the foot-prints of Jesus can be traced most clearly among the crowd.

There is plainly, then, a time for the cloister and a time for the crowd, in every man's life. But no man should live either wholly in the cloister or entirely in the crowd. Let us see where the distinctions of these complementary experiences lie. I take three points: First, the blessing of the cloister hour; second, the curse of the cloister life; third, the keeping of the spirit of the cloister in the crowd.

I. First, *the blessing of the cloister hour.*

"It is good for us to be here," cried Peter, in his wonder and awe. Whatever may be the full meaning of these words, this at least Peter declares, that it is good to be in Christ's presence and to see His glory; to be under Christ's influence and so to be able to live at the highest and best; to be moved to holy thought and stirred by pure desire. To be up on that quiet hilltop out of the noise and strain, the fretting and chafing of life, was the opportunity of grace. How good that is every man knows who lives in the midst of the crowd, earning his bread in the sweat of his face, and toiling out his long day amid the bustle of the world's traffic, and the grinding of its wheels. The

man who is hardly beset in his fortune, beginning to that feel the burden of life is almost too heavy to carry, and the sorrows of life too desolating to be endured, craves for the quiet of the cloister with an intenser desire. "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest," was the sigh of a man who was weary of the crowd. In those times, when men's deeds disappoint us and their words vex us, and even their faces seem unkind, we crave the cloister hour. And God gives His wearied ones this cloister hour. He calls to them, "Come ye apart, and rest awhile." He sends them quiet days. He makes a silence in their lives. He leads the men of the deeper desire up some Hermon, and Christ is transfigured before them.

Of this truth in its simple and, what I may call, without offence, its purely natural form, Wordsworth is the high priest. There is a passage in his "Prelude" which expresses both the craving and its satisfaction, with all the poet's high seriousness and moving simplicity. He had risen, in his unrest of mind, before the dawn. In the grey light of the morning, he brooded over his life and meaning. As the sun rose and flooded meadow and stream and the far-off shining sea with light, and as the birds awoke to song and the labourer came forth with quiet and honest content to his work in the field, all the stillness and charm of the scene fell upon him with refreshing and renewing power.

"Ah, need I say, dear friend, that to the brim
My heart was full: I made no vows: but vows
Were there made for me: bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives."¹

That is one blessing of the cloister hour.

It is a great gift of God to have the body and the mind and the heart calmed and renewed and healed by some influence from nature or by some deep conviction of the good providence of God. But there is a deeper need than nature or the kindest circumstance of life can supply. There is a need which only the direct touch with God Himself can satisfy. There is an exhaustion and a weariness, a monotony and a distaste, which are more perilous than any weakness of brain or of nerve. Then the one true renewal is to see the King in His beauty, and to behold the land which is very far off. Here is a man who has had his hours of dedication, his years of chivalrous service. He has known the glow of a passion for the souls of men. But these pass away. His enthusiasm chills. His once willing service becomes a drudgery. The sacrifices which formerly gave him one of his purest joys are now too high for him. The secret of this dullness and decline is always this—that he has kept no cloister hour. He has forgotten his need of the isolation and silence and vision of the Mount.

There is another sight which is as saddening and

¹ "The Prelude," bk. iv, lines 333-338.

sometimes more vexing. Here is a man who has given himself with an absorbing devotion to Christian service. He is busy in nearly all the agencies of a Christian congregation. He shares so eagerly in the exhausting work of a mission in some mean street that sarcastic friends suggest that he should sleep on its premises. Or he takes some part in an aggressive society, and gives his days and nights to the furtherance of some philanthropy. A few years pass by, and the man is found to be empty, noisy, fussy, lacking in all the finer graces of the Christian character. He shows nothing of that finer restraint and gentle patience, and sweet and gracious stillness which are among the most winsome and powerful pleadings of the Gospel. There have been men in the ranks of the Christian ministry who began Christ's service with high hope and true devotion. Their opening years were full of promise: but they spent themselves in the work of committees. They rushed about from conference to conference. They were never at ease in their own minds unless they were addressing some meeting, promoting some new scheme, absorbed and excited in some noisy philanthropy. The results of such a course of life are always disastrous and sometimes tragic. A low ideal creeps in and masters the will. The truths by which men should live seem platitudes. A nausea at the higher and nobler and more mystic experiences of the soul burdens and secretly distresses them. Conscience

begins to wither. The man is content merely to get through his day. As often the faith by which once he lived dies down like a flame without fuel. The man's later years are a slow decline to uselessness. It is not old age, as he may tell himself, which has taken the edge of his spirit and the keen note out of his voice. A man's spiritual powers, if he has lived his life aright, blossoms into beauty in his older years. It is the want of the cloister hour. He has never known the duty of being still. He has never entered into the grace of a patient waiting on God. He has never exercised himself unto that godliness which has no ambition to preside at meetings and to become powerful on committees, and to have himself and his activities always in evidence. In the cloister hour each of us is recalled to God, reconsecrated to His service, humbled and chastened and disciplined. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord," sings the psalmist of this cloister hour, "shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." Best of all, they shall see His glory, and shall say, with Peter's wonder and amazement, "It is good for us to be here."

II. Second, *the curse of the cloister life.*

The subtle temptation of the man who has known the blessing of the cloister hour is to crave for it as a constant felicity. Its emotion is a luxury; the vividness of its vision an entrancing delight. Its

keen passion for righteousness burns up every lower desire with the swift ease of fire. The supreme need of the soul would seem to be to turn the cloister hour into the cloister life. In one of the most musical and most endeared hymns of the Christian Church we find ourselves led by its writer to the verge of this temptation. There is no hymn which more tenderly expresses the joy of an absolved communicant than Horatius Bonar's solemn words—

“Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face;
Here would I touch and handle things unseen.”

But, as the hymn passes on, it approaches the peril of all ardent souls—

“Here let me feast, and, feasting, still prolong
The brief, bright hour of fellowship with Thee.
Too soon we rise; the symbols disappear;
The feast, though not the love, is past and gone.”

No, the feast cannot, should not, dare not be prolonged. To every communicant at the Lord's table there comes that word to those who sat down at the first supper of Christ, “Arise, let us go hence.” We do not rise “too soon” if, for a single hour, we have held this communion with Christ. The peril would be our abiding too long under that high emotion and becoming overdominated by its exquisite feeling. That breeds the craving, not for the blessing of a chastened spirit, a clear light on the path, and a more resolved will to follow in His steps, but for the flow of a weakening and

sentimental emotion. With a noble loyalty to the truth, the writer of the hymn catches himself up and, in soberer and wiser and devouter words, he sings—

“The bread and wine remove, but Thou art here,
Nearer than ever, still my Shield and Sun.”

We need the cloister hour, but not the cloister life.

The curse of the cloister life lies heavy and desolating on the history of Christendom. Even within Protestant communions its spell has been strongly felt. There are devout men and women who think that they are never at their best and highest, and never entirely religious, unless they are attending conferences on the state of the soul and meetings for the deepening of religious life. They run from convention to convention, and they have an inward belief that, if life could only be a constant succession of Bible-reading and hymn-singing and prayer, they would become pleasing to God. All men's eyes see plainly the wrong that such men and women do their own souls. They lose perspective in Christian doctrine, and begin to lay stress on some rite, or ceremony, or detail of the faith. They begin to love certain unctuous expressions, and to look askance on men who shrink from repeating them. They often become pharisaic and censorious, and are very eager in reviving and quickening their fellow-believers, whose interest in Christ they often openly question, to a more zealous faith. They have forgotten that it is as Christian to drive a

nail, or to plough a furrow, or to weave a piece of cotton, or to write an honest business letter, as it is to pray, or to discourse on a text of Scripture, or to hold an evangelistic meeting. They are in danger of the curse of the cloister life.

But of course the broad and saddening instances are to be found in the story of the Greek and Roman Churches. Within the bosom of these communions the cloister life is held to be the highest vocation. It is still considered that those who keep its lonely hours, and observe its ritual, serve God as He cannot be served in the carpenter's shop, or the tent-maker's loom, or the village home, or in whatever vocation a man may be called. I need not dwell on this broad and patent fact of history. What I need only mark is its curse. You know its morbid and unwholesome introspection. You know the crushing tyranny of the cell, and the corrupting suggestions of the confessional. You know the maddening monotony of its days, and the withering of all the tenderest and holiest and most sanctifying human affections—the affections of the husband and the father, the mother and the child. There is a mental and moral disease which is called *accidie*. What is *accidie*? It is a godless and a pathetic melancholy, a hopeless and heedless outlook on life and duty. *Accidie* is the mark of the curse of God on men who, whether in monkish cells or not, are living this self-centred cloister life. And you know the moral plagues which the cloister life

has bred. In the heyday of its popularity, and even yet, where it is not under the eyes of a strong Protestant criticism, the cloister life breaks out in unnatural crimes, and in the vulgarest and most licentious indulgences. Europe rose in protest against its monks, and tore down their abbeys, as men destroy the nests of hawks. They realised the curse of this cloister life, which mistakenly would say, "Let us build here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

III. Third, *the keeping of the spirit of the cloister in the crowd.*

A Christian life, then, which is to be healthful, and sane, and pure, is to be lived not in the cloister but in the crowd. But the cloister spirit must be kept in the busiest throng. In the crowd we grow decisive in character, tender in sympathy, patient with our fellows, firm in our self-control. In the crowd our virtues are exercised and disciplined, and in the busy ways of men we find our sphere for the service of God. But the crowd is only our field to be tilled, the highway for our pilgrimage, the arena of our struggle. The secret of our life there lies in this, that we keep the cloister spirit within. The cell for the worship of God is one not made with hands. It is the heart which God has already made for Himself.

William Canton, in his *Child's Book of Saints*, has set this truth in his charming version of the legend

of St. Simeon Stylites, the hermit who kept his vigils on the top of a pillar. For three years, through all its changing seasons, in sun and shower, by night and day, Simeon kept his lonely post, and schooled his soul in constant prayer. There came an angel who bade him come down from his strange oratory. He led the worn, emaciated, and half-mad man to a valley where a goose-herd lived, who in a simple piety kept his hours of prayer, and tended his flock in laborious hours of service. The hermit found the peasant, and with him a little child. Her father and mother had been killed by robbers when she was a mere babe. The goose-herd had rescued her, carried her home, nursed her, and taught her, and now she ran, in happy confidence and joy, by his side. The hermit looked upon them both, and God's Spirit taught him the lesson he needed. He cried to the peasant, "Oh, son, now I know why thou art so pleasing in God's eyes. Early hast thou learned the love which gives all and asks nothing, which suffereth long and is kind, and this I have not learned. A small thing, and too common it seemed to me; but now I see that it is holier than austerities, and availeth more than fasting, and is the prayer of prayers. Late have I sought thee, thou ancient truth; late have I found thee, thou ancient beauty; yet even in the gloaming of my days may there still be light enough to win my way home."

We follow One whose life knew the cloister hour,

whose heart loved the crowd, whose years were a constant keeping of the cloister spirit in the crowd. He came down from His hour of Transfiguration to the crowd around the demoniac child, to the crowd who thronged Him in the city, to the crowd who went up the way of weeping to Calvary, and to the crowd in whose midst He died. Peter would have built Christ a tabernacle on a secluded hill. He came down to the crowd and to His cross. "Unto Him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

XVIII

THE VOICE THAT ANSWERS OUR FEAR

“While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them : and they feared as they entered into the cloud. And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is My beloved Son ; hear Him.”—
LUKE ix. 34, 35.

WHEN Jesus was born in Bethlehem a strange star shone in the heavens. When He was crucified in Jerusalem three hours of darkness cast their gloom over His cross. When He arose from the dead an angel in shining garments sat within His tomb. How significant and how fitting are these heavenly signs—the unknown star, the brooding darkness, the deathless angel ! When Jesus was transfigured, and the glory of God shone in His face, and men looked into the infinite and transcendent, so far beyond their power to understand, there came this symbol of the overshadowing cloud. With the enveloping cloud there came a fear. While they feared, the voice spake, “This is My beloved Son.”

This is no single and isolated experience. God is always making Himself known to men. He is still letting men see His glory. As often as God makes a fresh revelation to any human soul there

are these three things, the cloud, the fear, and the voice that answers the fear. Let us consider their significances.

I. In the first place: *the significance of the cloud.*

The cloud in the usage of Scripture is always the symbol of the veil. It always veils a glory too great for mortal ken. It curtains off a sight too awful for human eyes. It marks the truth that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite. It is used to temper a vision to eyes that the vision might blind. There is a glory into which the angels may not look, and they veil their faces with their wings. When any sight would be too dreadful for the gaze of men it is always veiled from them by a cloud.

Mark how universal is the use of the cloud as the sign and veil of a sacred mystery. When Abraham came out of Ur of the Chaldees, God was only a dim-figured word to him. The day came when God made him a more intimate revelation, and came nearer to him, and gave him a new name and a larger promise, and then there was seen the cloud. When Jacob rose into a higher knowledge of God he lay down to sleep at Bethel. When the darkness was spread over its stony hillside he beheld God again, and knew it to be the House of God. But it was while the cloud was covering him over that God drew near. When Moses went up into the mountain to learn God's

new name, "the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and in truth," he entered into a cloud. Those who looked up into the mountain saw it covered with that cloud which tempered the sight of God. When Elijah stood in his tent door at Horeb the cloud again shrouded the near presence of the Most High. When Isaiah went up to the holy place, in the year that king Uzziah died, he looked and saw in his vision the throne high and lifted up, but as he prostrated himself, the smoke filled the temple, and from behind that cloud he heard the voices that cried, "Holy, holy, holy." He had learned how infinitely high and unalterable is the righteousness of God. Right down through all the record to that cloud which received Jesus out of men's sight, it is the symbol of that veil which God hangs between men's eyes and His own wonderfulness, and out of which men hear the voice. Here on the Mount of Transfiguration, when the glory of God is to be seen on the face of Jesus Christ, and the travail of His soul is to be disclosed, and a new and dazzling truth is to be revealed to men, God comes with a cloud.

There is always the cloud when a new revelation is to be given. Never is God about to reveal Himself in some new loveliness hitherto withholden, or to speak to men some renewing or unforgettable word, or to lead them up into some hitherto inaccessible height of duty, but the cloud falls upon

them, and, with the cloud, the fear. It is not always a mist that covers a mountain top, or a darkness which blots out the blue sky and the friendly stars, or a smoke which fills the house of God. These sympathetic signs of nature and these outward symbols are still seen. We often think that it is upon some night of inky darkness that our sorrows hang like a pall upon us. We think that it is upon some day of storm that the storm falls upon our lives. The poets have interpreted these sympathetic symbols of nature by their instinctive sense of what is fitting. King Lear comes to the height of his frenzied sorrow when the storm is lashing the heath in fury. Robert Burns sees in the "chill November's surly blast," sweeping away the autumn leaves, the mirror of his mood and of his misfortunes. Browning finds the darkness and the trouble of his doubt matched by the murky cloud and driving storm over the moor on Christmas Eve. But the cloud is seen as much in the doubt which blots out the certainties once surely believed, the shadow which falls upon the mind, the sorrow which darkens the heart, and the disasters which rob us of security and peace. Sometimes the cloud falls upon our faith in the being of God. The sure and glad sense of His love and knowledge and nearness, all that makes God dear to us, is taken away. We pass into its shadow, and things once clearly seen are hidden. Like Jean Paul Richter, we look up to behold only a socket in which there is no eye, and

we hear the shriek of a fatherless world. Sometimes the cloud falls upon the providence of God. We pass into ways of poverty which ashame our faces and sadden our thoughts. We walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and the world is emptier and lonelier for all the days to come. The cup of pain is put into our hands, and we drink it with trembling and with tears. We have sorrow upon sorrow—unrealised aims, disappointed hopes, the neglect and contempt of men. Sometimes the cloud falls upon the will of God. We stand facing two paths compelled to make some choice, offered some future which is only hardship and lessened opportunity and narrower ways. We have passed into the cloud, but it is the cloud which overshadows men when God is about to make Himself and His grace and truth more fully known to them.

Let me make this experience clear by two instances, one on the broader scale of Church history, the other on the narrower sphere of individual experience. The dark days of the eighteenth century in Scotland has been known as the days of the Moderates. Scotsmen of every communion now realise how far below the flood-tide of the Reformation, with all its heat, and crude thinking, and high words, and deeds of violence, the tide of religious life and thought and feeling flowed in those dead years of the eighteenth century. The truth as it is in Jesus had been almost forgotten.

The Gospel had lost both its note of music and its note of appeal. The Church of Christ in Scotland had fallen into that fear of enthusiasm which was the sure sign that its zeal had burned low, and that it knew nothing of the passionate love of Christ and the noble madness of Paul. Its ministry held men of culture, of a certain stately and measured eloquence, and in some cases of high powers of mind. But they knew little of that power of the Holy Ghost which is a fire in the bones. It was a time of the cloud. Humble men who dwelt amid the silence of the lonely hills, and plain cottars who had not forgotten to pray, feared as they saw this darkness falling over their land and their Church. But out of the cloud there came the voice which uttered the new revelation. The old thought of God had been too distant. The old knowledge of Christ had been too inhuman. The old ideal of prayer had been too formal. The life of the Scottish Church had ebbed because God in Christ was not fully known. Then came the simple evangelical preachers, of whom Boston of Ettrick is the type, and the Scotland that lay under the cloud heard the voice that said in the one message which always comes at such a time, "This is My beloved Son; hear Him."

The second illustration I take from a work of imagination. Although it is an imaginative work, yet I believe it portrays an actual history, and is in true accord with Christian experience. When

George Eliot tells the story of *Silas Marner* she has in view merely the trial and strain which a simple soul may pass through. But her story has a greater message than she seems to realise. Silas Marner is a simple-minded weaver who lives contentedly in a humble sphere, and finds his chief delight in the worship and fellowship and service of a little Christian congregation. His life is about to be crowned by a modest and tender love when the cloud falls. He is basely slandered, and he cannot disprove the accusation. The little church cast him out of its fellowship, and its simple folk look at him with eyes of shame, and his dearest disowns him. As he enters the cloud this unlesioned soul finds his thought of God not large enough for his experience. His faith fails. He sinks into moroseness and bitterness. He fears and hates the face of man. On the edge of a lonely moor he makes a new home, keeping himself watchfully aloof, and refusing to meet the most friendly advances. But under the experiences of the years his mind enlarges. Voices speak to him in his darkness. He learns what all men must learn, from the days of Job down to the last sufferer under the mystery of pain, that God is not a far-off, placid, easy-going divinity, but One who loves men with a moral passion, deals with them for a spiritual purpose, and can make them perfect only through suffering. The simple weaver learned the significance of the cloud.

II. In the second place: *the significance of the fear.*

"They feared as they entered into the cloud." We do not wonder that Peter, and James, and John feared. The cloud came down upon them so suddenly. It blotted out the vision which had ravished their eyes, and awed their hearts. It had swept away Moses and Elias. They were left alone in the chilling mist. What had happened, and what might happen next, they could not tell. They feared as they entered into the cloud.

That fear possesses every human heart as the cloud falls, and God means that it should be so. It is only when men fear that they can hear the voice. Whether the cloud be a mist on a hilltop, or a dark period in the history of our country, or an overwhelming disaster in the industrial life of our times, or an overshadowing sorrow on our hearts, we know how we tremble and are still as we enter it. We would fain have no shadows on our path. We love to choose and see our path. We are eager to know what lies before us, even though the path winds uphill all the way. When the cloud comes down, and we lie in the darkness, we fear. When Luther was facing the despotism which held the wills of men in bondage, and realised that the powers of hell were gathered against him, even his dauntless heart trembled. The cloud had come down upon all that was dear and familiar and trusted, and a great fear at times fell upon him. He

did not know that, to that fear, God would make Himself known as a Father into whose presence every child might pass with intimate appeal. When Europe over a hundred years ago was lying under the terror of the French Revolution, men did not know what was coming on the earth, and their hearts failed them for fear. The cloud seemed to have come down upon faith and upon righteousness, and upon the compassion of man for man. They did not know that, in their fear, they would learn the lesson which never would be forgotten, that God is verily a God that judgeth in the earth. A little over half a century ago the masters of physical science seemed to be sapping men's faith in miracle and prayer. Humble believers saw the cloud falling, like a chill mist, over the simple certainties of their religious life. They feared as they entered into the cloud. They did not know that God was about to reveal Himself more wondrously as the God to whom prayer was a necessity, and miracle a method of His providence and grace. Still more remarkable was that experience of days which are scarcely yet numbered. In our own time the scholar and the critic have been examining the structure and exploring the sources of the Scriptures. They seemed to be despoilers of its inspiration and authority. What a cloud seemed to fall over this book of prophecies! Moses and Elijah and all their band seemed to be taken from us. Humble folk feared as they entered into the cloud. They did not know

that, as they feared, the voice of God would call to them with a new significance, to regard not merely the sentences of the book, but to listen to its great direction, "This is My beloved Son; hear Him."

In the light of these historic instances we may understand the significance of our own fear. Here is one upon whose youth there fell a blight, and all his outlook was changed, and his years seemed to have become a dreary drudgery. Here is another whose strength failed, and weakness fell upon his frame, and his shaken nerves refused their office. Here is another whose memory flashes back to that time when all seemed to go amiss, when misfortune followed upon misfortune, and trust in men and even love to those to whom love was due withered, and he neither knew nor cared which way his steps might lead. Here is another who has come to that darkest hour when the only path before him leads on to loss and pain. How all of these feared as they entered into the cloud. Yet it was in that fear, in its stillness, and in response to its cry, that God revealed Himself and His truth and made known His ways. The whole significance is disclosed in that dread hour of Christ's experience in the garden of Gethsemane. The cloud came down upon His life. Much which had been clear, and fair, and alluring was blotted out. He feared as He entered the cloud. We know how His hands trembled when He took up the cup. But it was in

that fear that there came the voice which answers all fear, and brings light and calm and strength.

III. In the third place: *the significance of the voice.*

It was while they were overshadowed by the cloud and while they were hushed in fear that the voice spoke. It is always so. For the voice is simply that word of God which we either will not, or cannot, hear until we are lying in sobering silence under the cloud. The voice is simply that message of God which may come from some newly interpreted passage of His word, from some incident of His providence, from some kindly speech on a friend's lips, or even in the voice of a little child.

Will you allow me, that I may make this clear and appealing to some troubled hearts whom I know, to call up a simple and yet significant incident? A few years ago a business man found his affairs becoming involved. He had had for many years a singularly prosperous career. He had made himself a happy home, and one little daughter had brought a second love-light to his hearth. He had been a strenuous worker in Christian service in his younger years. As his wealth and station increased, and the burden of his business grew heavier, he thought himself compelled to withdraw from so active a part in Christian work. As misfortune after misfortune fell upon his business, he devoted himself to it with a feverish energy. All seemed unavailing. The current of disaster was

carrying him away. In the midst of it all his wife died. The cloud had come down and overshadowed him, and he feared as he entered into the cloud. On the night of that dark winter afternoon when he carried his wife's body to the grave he brought his little daughter's crib into his own room to hush her sorrow and to comfort his own sad heart. The hours of the night passed slowly away, but sleep came not with them. He thought the child had sobbed herself into slumber. Suddenly a cry, a child's broken-hearted cry, rang out in a single word "Father!" It was only a child's cry to an earthly father, but it was the voice out of the cloud. It was the truth he had never really believed, never really known. It was the truth that God intended to reveal. He rose and, in a new penitence, he submitted himself and his need to the will and the way of his Father. He interpreted the significance of the cloud.

"Hear Him." This is the message which in some form is given to men who fear as they enter the cloud. Out of every cloud which shall fall over men, on their knowledge, or faith, or understanding of God's will, or interpretation of His ways, there comes this one word, "Hear Him." When God's being has become dim and uncertain, and the cloud of doubt so overshadows your heart that you cannot pray, hear Him who calls, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." When God's character seems dark and unlovely, and your heart rebels against

some grim word which has been taught you by men who have not considered God's great mind, and the cloud overshadows you, hear Him who saith, "He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil." When God's providence seems estranged, and the cloud has fallen upon your daily life, and all that makes it gracious has been taken away, hear Him who saith, "If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" If the will of God seems hard and stern and bids you pass through a baptism, until you find the cloud upon your spirit and you lie under its fear, hear Him who saith, "I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." Whatever cloud you enter, the cloud of a guilty conscience, of a chilled faith, of a searching loneliness, as you fear, hear Him who has a word for every hour. In time to come, if not while trembling under the shadow, you will learn the significance of the cloud, the fear, and the voice.

XIX

THE TIMES OF SILENCE

“And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.”—MATT. xvii. 9.

THIS charge to tell the vision to no man comes upon us with a measure of surprise. Twice while at Cæsarea Philippi, Jesus laid the seal of reticence upon His disciples. We do not wonder that He forbade them speak of Him as “the Christ,” for His hour was not yet come. But we have some surprise that these three disciples should have been forbidden to speak to any man of what they had seen and heard on the mount. They had beheld Christ’s glory. An adoring faith and a new consecration had been given them. It would have seemed to be their duty to tell the wondrous tale. If they had been cautioned against speaking to the multitude, at least they might have been permitted to whisper the secret in low, quiet tones, as the evening hours passed away, to Andrew, or to Philip, or to Thomas. But the words of Christ are distinct and peremptory, “Tell the vision to no man.”

There is a well-known proverb, "Speech is silvern, but silence is golden," which has had but little force in the Christian life. To speak about God, and to speak for God, to be always ready with a word for Christ, has been set down as a gift to be coveted and a pre-eminent grace. There is a time to speak. Christ has called upon us to confess Him before men. Christian fellowship is one of the singularly powerful modes of light and strength. It was a vital moment in the life of that profane young tinker of Bedford when he heard the godly women speaking together of God's dealings with them as they sat in the afternoon sun. He was given his first glance in through the gate of the city of his dream. Open testimony has a well-marked blessing. For a man to publicly declare what God has done for his soul sets his will, nerves his courage, and roots his faith more deeply in his heart. For one man to make a public confession of Christ's name helps another, more timid and diffident, to stand by his side. The effect of a baptism of God's Spirit is often to open a man's lips. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Speech has a high place in Christian service.

But most men feel that this is not the whole truth. There are shy and shrinking souls who are baptized by God's Spirit, and they remain shy and shrinking souls to the end. They cannot wear their hearts upon their sleeve, either in the love of man or love of God.

To these men and women, whose lives are often pathways of sacrifice, all speech is difficult, and religious conversation is almost pain. There are others who can be fluent and eloquent in their testimony, yet their lives are not free from grave faults. They are often found to be untruthful, and they sometimes slip into sins of which it is a shame even to speak. They are frequently coarsened and vulgarised by the exposure of their religious experience. It stands true that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. But that speech is not always speech to men. It may be that daring soliloquy of which the Book of Psalms is full. It may be that speech with God while a man is musing and the fire burns. In the religious life, as elsewhere, speech may be silvern and silence golden. Again and again Christ says to us, "Tell no man."

Let us mark two points in this subject. In the first place, the times of silence in a Christian life. In the second place, the times of speech.

I. In the first place: *the times of silence in a Christian life.*

In the conduct of our daily lives silence is often a high, and a difficult, and a most praiseworthy duty. To begin with, there are those things of which it is a shame to speak. There are works of darkness which it may be a preacher's duty to rebuke with frankness and delicacy, and a

judge's office to prove and to punish. But these should not be once named in ordinary conversation. That foul scandal, that gross story, that suggestive illusion, that indecent jest, that bit of malicious gossip, whatever imperils purity or truth or kindness, should be left unmentioned. The scribes and Pharisees brought to Jesus a woman they had taken in adultery. They dwelt with a coarse emphasis on the details of her sin. Jesus stooped down and wrote upon the ground. He had more purposes than one in this mode of silent rebuke. But one purpose most certainly was to bring shame to the faces of men who did not know when silence is golden.

There is another time to be silent, when we are deeply stirred by any emotion of anger. We all suffer injustice. We are all ignorantly blamed. We are all scorned behind our backs, and the bird of the air carries the matter to our ears. The hot blood surges in our veins. The keen and bitter word is minted in our mind. Let it remain unspoken by the tongue. We all pass into hours of sorrow and loss and pain. We are left much alone, and we find ourselves in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes. We think our bitter thoughts and are ready to break out into self-pitying lamentations. No man should lie under an imputation of dishonesty or dishonour. Yet every man should lay upon himself in regard to much that is said about him this solemn charge

of silence. Scorn must be suffered without protest. Injustices must be borne in a meek patience. Grief would be grave, equable, calm. When Saul was scorned by the men of Israel, and they cried in open derision, "Can this man save us?" he held his peace with a noble self-mastery. When Jonathan marked the wrong which was purposed toward his friend David, his devoted heart was moved to a deep moral indignation. He rose from the table in protest, but he kept his silence. When Job passed through his days of desolating loss, his words were few and noble in their submission. When the last blow fell, and he was bewildered in mind and broken in heart, he kept a perfect silence. For seven days his friends sat with him, and he neither paraded his sorrow nor sought their words of pity. He knew the wisdom of reticence in grief. Most perfect instance of all, when Jesus was questioned by Herod, when He was cross-examined by Pilate, when He was derided by priest and scribe, and taunted by those who passed by His cross, He held His peace. When you and I are stirred by any deep emotion of anger, or of a sense of wrong, or of grief at impoverishing loss or bitter detraction, or of sorrow under a shadowing bereavement, we should remember that silence is golden.

If silence be a wise counsel for much of our daily intercourse, and for the more moving experiences of life, it has a high value in the things of

the soul. There are hours too sacred to be lightly spoken of. There are joys too rare and delicate in their bloom to be coarsely handled in common speech. There is a fellowship with God about which a man cannot babble without finding the door of the secret place shut upon him. There were three courts in the temple at Jerusalem. There was the outer court, where even the Gentiles who cared nothing for the God of Israel or the faith of the Hebrew people might freely come. There was the holy place with its sacred things, where only the Hebrew worshipper might walk. There was the most holy place, over which the veil of the temple hung, and into its unseen and unknown seclusion the high priest entered once every year, alone. There are these three courts in the life of a Christian man. There is the outer court, where a man who is living his life in the world must keep company with all who enter its circle. He must rub shoulders with the crowd, although he never forgets that they cannot enter into his secret. There is the holy place, where fellow-believers may pass, and speech and thought of the things of God have a gracious liberty. But there is the most holy place, and what passes there between God and the soul is to be kept with a guarded reticence until there is need for its being told. Men may guess that a man has been in the most holy place. The people heard the chiming of the bells of the high priest as he ministered

within. They saw his face stamped with a high seriousness and a solemn awe when he came out. But he did not stand at the temple gate, or lift up his voice in the court of the Gentiles, to tell the uncircumcised what God could do for His people.

So men may catch a look in your eyes, a meekness in your bearing, an accent in your prayer, an energy in your service, which will tell them that you have been in the holiest of all. They will learn, even from your boldness, that you have been with Jesus. But you must keep silence; you must not untimeously nor needlessly detail the joys and fears of that solemn hour. You must tell the vision to no man as you come down from the mount. Every Christian heart knows this truth. There are things which Paul said are not lawful for a man to utter, because they are visions and revelations of the Lord. There are hours of sobbing repentance, of unforgettable vows, of the mystic sense of God's presence, of the clear vision of Christ, and of absolute surrender to His will which we must keep within the veil of a careful reticence. There are times when a man is sure he is moved by the Holy Ghost, when the power of evil dies down within, and holiness appears entrancing, and there is only one thing to be desired of the Lord. Of such sights as these Christ says to you as you come down from the mount, "Tell the vision to no man."

The reasons for this sealing of the lips are as

gracious as the command. Plainly, had Peter and James and John come down with a glowing account of the wondrous sight on the mountain top, they would have hindered Christ and wronged their own souls. Some who heard would have scoffed. Others would have aimed their barbed jests at these simple, sleep-bound dreamers. Others would have been too eager to believe that the Messianic King had come, and the land would have been ablaze with the rekindled fire of Zealotry. But the deeper reason lies in this, that all visions of the most holy place are too sacred for common ears, and are seldom to be spoken of to men. Had Peter stood forth to tell the story, had he gone up and down proclaiming this august and transcendent sight, how quickly he would have become vulgarised, a marvel-monger, a mere actor on the stage! Only as Peter and James and John kept it close within their brooding hearts did the certainty and significance of it stand out in increasing clearness. Its wonder, and beauty, and meaning became more vivid day by day, until, when Christ rose from the dead, the secret behind Christ's shining face was grasped and held.

II. In the second place: *the times of speech in the religious life.*

"Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." If there be a

time for golden silence there is also a time for silvern speech. There is a time when a man may unlock his heart, when he must speak of the hour in the holy place, and tell the fitting company the secret of the Lord. When Mary saw the glory of the Lord as He walked in the garden, and the two disciples heard Him pray as He blessed their bread, and the company of the upper room bowed down under His benediction of peace, the time of speech had come.

There are two marked occasions for speech, however costly, in religious things. The first of these is *when Christ needs testimony*. When the faith of Christ is imperilled, when doubt is casting a haze over the great certainties of the Christian faith, when trembling hearts are becoming despondent over the progress of the kingdom, then the men who have seen Christ's glory are called upon to bear witness to it. There are decades of strange denials of Christ's Deity and Saviourhood. There are epochs when faith in the unseen declines. There are times when the scholar and the critic who have not seen the face of the Lord speak with boldness of His empty tomb. What men need then is not merely the reply of a scholarship which is more competent and more careful, not merely the argument of a massive reasoning, not merely the eloquent pleading of a great conviction. It is the witness of a testimony. It is the breaking of a silence which men may commonly keep. In

"In Memoriam," which is at once a memorial and the history of a soul passing from doubt to clearest faith, Tennyson sets this truth in two fervent stanzas —

"If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice, 'Believe no more,'
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the godless deep.

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath, the heart
Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'"

There are other times than those in which a man is facing confident or scornful unbelief, when testimony may have a peculiar power. One may find himself in the company of the open, accessible, sympathetic. He may find gathered round him young hearts which are waiting to hear the revelation of Christ. How fitting and how comely was that act of testimony given by Professor Agassiz. He had gathered his students for a summer school of natural history in the island of Penikese. The large barn in which the class met was filled on the opening morning with expectant and eager minds. As he looked out upon them, gathered together on that lovely summer day, the solemn thought of God and His power and His love overcame him. They were young men of all ranks and conditions, of all faiths, and of no faith at all. He stood for a moment in hesitation, and then called upon them to join

in silently asking God's blessing on their work together.

“Then the master in his place,
Bowed his head a little space,
And the leaves by soft airs stirred,
Lapse of wave and cry of bird,
Left the solemn hush unbroken,
Of that wordless prayer unspoken,
While its wish, on earth unsaid,
Rose to heaven interpreted.”¹

Such opportunities come to us all. It will be well for us all if, under the power of God's Spirit, we know as wisely when and how to tell the vision to men.

There is a second occasion when we may break our religious reticence. That is *when some wandering soul needs light*. There are times in the religious history of every soul when the chief need is to see and know how another has entered into the pilgrimage. There is no light so clear or so kindly as that which gleams from another pilgrim's well-trimmed lamp. That is the peculiar office of wise religious biography. How many thousands have been led to the wicket gate by the *Memoirs of M'Cheyne*? How many young souls have trembled, with Robert William Dale, over James's *Anxious Enquirer*? The fascination of the *Pilgrim's Progress* is not its limpid and musical English, and not its enchanting imaginative beauty. Its power with men lies in this, that it is the revelation of an

¹ Whittier, “The Prayer of Agassiz.”

experience. Here in Bunyan's book we may read the story of "Grace Abounding," written in a way to throw light upon the path of every bewildered sinner. Each man and woman who has seen the vision will come to the hour when the best service they can render to some erring or straying or despairing soul is to reveal the vision of the Lord.

I know no tribute to Edward Irving finer than that paid to him by Thomas Carlyle. It was written nearly half a century after the incident it records. As Carlyle sets it down, he says that "it remains always a colloquy to me of which the remembrance is wonderfully sweet." Carlyle had been visiting Irving, then a young preacher in Glasgow, and Irving was giving him a convoy as he set out on Monday morning to walk to Annan. They came at the setting sun to Drumclog Moor. The talk had become familiar and more deeply interesting as the hours of the day had passed away. They sat down before bidding each other farewell. "Looking into the western radiance we talked yet awhile, loth both of us to go. It was just here, as the sun was setting, that Irving drew from me by degrees in the softest manner the confession that I did not think as he of the Christian religion, and that it was vain for me to expect that I ever could or should."¹ How did Carlyle know what Irving thought of the Christian religion? How was Carlyle led to speak on this subject on which

¹ *Reminiscences*, vol. i. p. 178.

he was an unassured and bewildered man? It is not easy for two young men to unbosom themselves of their deepest religious experiences, all the more that they are close intimates in the intercourse of a college life. What is the picture behind this confession which Irving draws from Carlyle? It is that of one man, who has seen the vision in the mount, coming to the hour when he feels he must reveal it, with the silent prayer that the other also may see the vision. The scene is so unforgettable that the old man writing in London forty-five years after speaks of it as though it had happened on the day before, and recognises it to have been a witness given by a saved soul that he might win another also to see the Lord. "Tell the vision to no man" until the hour and the man present themselves, when Christ needs your testimony, and those who in the shadow of death need your light and His. "O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise."

XX

CHRIST'S REQUIEM OVER JOHN THE BAPTIST

"And His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them."—MATT. xvii. 10-12.

THESE words were spoken while Jesus was coming down from the Mount of Transfiguration. He had been speaking to Peter and James and John of what they had seen in the mount. The unveiling of Christ's glory had quickened those Messianic hopes of a visible kingdom which were nourished in every Jewish heart. They looked forward to a day when the glory they had seen should be made manifest to all men. An old prophecy rises up in their minds. Every schoolboy had been taught that, before the Messiah should come, Elijah would again call Israel to faith and holiness. In every synagogue the scribes had underscored that prediction. The disciples had had their expectation quickened by the sight of Elijah. They put to

Jesus the question, "Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come." I see Jesus turning to them, and standing for a moment in silence. The face of one He loved rises before Him. He recalls his brief ministry, his ringing words, his clear testimony, his lonely martyrdom. Very softly He replies, "Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." That is Christ's requiem over John the Baptist.

A requiem, in the larger meaning of the word, is a chant of tender regret for the dead, and a brief and simple tribute to their memory. Jesus had already pronounced his eulogium on John. When John was lying in Herod's prison, and had sent out his bewildered cry, Jesus had passed upon him that noble encomium with its illuminating appreciation, ending in that word of high praise, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Now when life is over, in briefer, more restrained, and more tender speech, He utters this requiem. Let us listen first to the notes of the requiem, and in the second place mark its messages for our lives.

I. In the first place, *the notes of Christ's requiem over John the Baptist.*

The first note Christ sounds touches *John's work*. It was a childish interpretation of the scribes that

Elijah would come again. That interpretation darkened men's minds to the real character of John the Baptist. The old prophecy was fulfilled, as the angels said, when John came in the power and spirit of Elijah. The parallel between Elijah and John is so close that we wonder how the men of his time missed it. Plainly it was the ruling motive in John's own mind. Elijah came girt with his leathern girdle, living his simple, austere, and lonely life, drinking from the brook, and fed by the charity of God. John came with his garment of camel's hair, finding his home in the wilderness and eating the food of its poor peasants. Both found the nation sunk in unbelief and indifference. Both saw, with the deep perception of men who brood in the silence, how false to the faith and ideal of Israel were the teachers of the people. Both confronted moral evil in high places. Herod and Herodias are the New Testament counterparts of Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah quickened the nation's conscience, rebaptized its hopes, and left behind him a school of disciples in whose hearts the good seed of the kingdom had been sown. That also was John's work. Looked at from the outside, John's ministry had been only a vivid and shortlived light. Judged from one point of view, he had done nothing more than stir a dormant people into a transient mood of repentance, expose the Pharisees and Sadducees by his teaching, and rebuke them by his zeal. The movement which drew all Judea and Jerusalem to

listen to him in the wilderness left no mark on the mind of the people. But his was a word of God, and it accomplished that for which it was sent. It rekindled hope and desire. It made men muse about the Messiah. It prepared a company of young men, Peter, and Andrew, and James, and John, and their fellows, to see the Christ when He came. The work of John also was to prepare the way of the Lord.

The second note in the requiem touches *John's peculiar sorrow*. "They knew him not." I venture to call this one of the darkest shadows that can fall on any man's life. We all have those sorrows which are inevitable—loss and estrangement and loneliness and bereavement and pain. However bright long stretches of a man's life may be, these dark-robed angels of God will meet him by the way. John knew them all. But the sorrow which darkens a man's heart and chills his spirit is the want of recognition. A little child will break out into passionate tears when he finds himself misunderstood. The most patient servant has a rankling sense of wrong when an ungrudging and steadfast loyalty is unnoticed and unpraised. Men in public life who maintain a high ideal, and keep their hands clean, and fulfil their duties with a costly sacrifice, work on in a dull mind when they find their work slighted and unregarded. In Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians there is an eager protest against this wrong. With a pathetic exposure of his heart

he pleads with the Corinthian Church for recognition. Other teachers, more eloquent and more alluring, had bereaved him of their gratitude and affection. The cry of his wounded spirit is heard in the closing chapter, and becomes keen in the words, "I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love, the less I be loved." Arnold of Rugby was the prophet of a new era in education. He threw himself, with the concentration of an ardent nature, into the work of training a boy to realise and to imitate the manliness of Christ. He was vexed by suspicions, assailed by ridicule, and defamed by calumnies. In his letters to his friends he reveals the anguish of his heart.¹ Its keenest pain is the want of recognition. In the simplest services and humblest vocations as much as in the highest offices, men have been shadowed by this peculiar sorrow. Of reformer and philanthropist, of teacher and forerunner in every new era, of the noblest and best in every service it can be written, "They knew him not." John the Baptist came as the last prophet of the Jewish people. His voice was the last of those which had called his countrymen to repentance. He was the herald of the new day. Yet his countrymen knew him not, and that was his peculiar sorrow.

The third note in Christ's requiem touches *John's death*. "They have done unto him whatsoever they listed." John's death was the fitting crown to the

¹ Cf. Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, ch. iii. ; also Letter 105.

lonely and unappreciated service of his life. His murder is one of the most dastardly deeds of history. When Herod gave the head of John the Baptist in a charger to Herodias, he committed that sin against the Holy Ghost which hath never forgiveness. As Jesus spoke, the birthday feast, the foolish boast, the lonely death in the prison, and the gross and sensual passions which had found their outlet in revenge, rose up before Him. John's death, as Jesus suggests, was not only a tragedy but a martyrdom. It ranks John with that long and still continuing procession of nobles who seal their testimony with their lives. When you make out the list of the men who have died for liberty, for purity, and for truth, in steadfast loyalty to the work of the Kingdom of God, you cannot put in the name of the prophet of Horeb, but you shall put in that second and greater Elijah, John the Baptist. When that shining company are called from market-place and seashore and scaffold, this saint of God shall be called also from his dungeon, and shall stand as the first witness who died for Jesus of Nazareth. When Christ adds, "Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them," He is giving John to sit with Him on His throne.

II. In the second place, *the messages of Christ's requiem over John the Baptist.*

The life of John seems so remote from our time, so singular in its circumstances, and so unique in its

service, that men shrink from finding in it light or guidance for their lives. We feel the truth of that fine characterisation by F. W. H. Myers—

“ John, than which man a greater or a sadder
Not till this day has been of woman born ;
John, like some lonely peak by the Creator
Fired with the red glow of the rushing morn.”

But all service ranks the same with God. Every man has his own loyalty to attain. The vital and the lovely things in John's life are the vital and lovely things in every life which is pure and helpful to God and man.

This is the first message, that *the enduring worth of every life is its service to the Kingdom of God*. That is the chief *motif* of Christ's requiem over John. Men of his time summed up his life as a failure. He amassed no wealth. He founded no order. He wrote no book. His popularity was only a morning glory. A small band of obscure men laid him in his grave. Yet Christ sets him foremost in the ranks of men because of his service to the Kingdom of God.

That is the Divine test of all our lives, both here and hereafter. All the enduring elements of the human body can be resolved into a little grey dust which can be held in the hollow of the hand. The enduring elements of a man's life, of his toil and struggle, his hopes and fears, his aims and his endeavours, can be resolved into his service for the Kingdom of God. Whether a man has had great

possessions, or has struggled with poverty all his years, whether he has travelled over five continents, or has lived within the confines of the least of all lands, whether he has won public honours or been denied them, matters nothing at all in the end. It is of no consequence now that John drew crowds to his baptism at the waters of Jordan. It is a mere detail that he died in Herod's prison. It is of little more consequence than that Herod was drunken and Salome danced at his feast. This is the vital and enduring thing, that John laid a stone, an everlasting stone, in the Kingdom of God. That is the highest attainment, and that is possible to any man. The simplest girl who died with trembling in the arena, and awoke faith and courage in some who looked on; the humblest villager who walked up and down its streets in the beauty of holiness, until young eyes looked on his grey hair as a crown of righteousness; the most obscure servant of his country who died at his post when famine was decimating his district, because Christ had given him his charge—these did service to the Kingdom of God. These all stand with John, and over them Christ chants His requiem.

How this truth exalts all true and simple lives! The scholar who has spent a long life in carrying on a single line of learning; the teacher who has kindled an undying zeal in some young heart; the evangelist who has won a single soul to faith in Christ; the student who has done no more than leave behind him, before

his early death, the legacy of a stainless honour and an unfaltering integrity, to be an enriching grace to a generation of his fellows; the mother who has trained, with gentle hands and soft shy speech, a single lad to steadfast dutifulness; the little child who has touched with his soft fingers the door of a man's heart which was fast closing and opened it to let the King of Glory in—these are all of the spiritual kin of John the Baptist. The issue of their lives and the abiding consequences of their service no man can realise. But their lives and their deaths are precious in the sight of Him who sang His requiem over John.

The second message is that *there is an aureole of sorrow around the noblest brows*. There is a strange sadness in every life which is spiritually great, and the sadness seems to be proportionate to the greatness. It must not be thought that these devoted lives have no hours of radiant and pure and strengthening joy. They have their joys of pure thought and holy feeling, which are wells of delight, of which coarser natures have never drunk. They have had the joys of their hours of consecration, of their self-forgetting services to their fellow-men, and of their costly sacrifices to God. Yet around the brows of the most radiant face, shining with delight in things true, and good, and beautiful, there is always this circling aureole of sorrow. This sorrow is of two kinds. It is the sorrow of a deep insight and a keen sympathy. Those who see clearly into

the misery, and the crime, and the shame and sin of men's lives, cannot but be burdened at the sight. They feel keenly the wrongs and injustices and hopeless privations of the poor. They mark the faces which are lined with care and stamped with the imprint of pain. They know how many homes are shadowed by secret and incurable grief. They see the stains of tears on women's faces. They hear the children cry. They know how many lives are disappointed and broken and hopeless, and how many will be glad when it is all over. "The sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep." Like Moffat in South Africa, they are stunned by the dulness and stupor of men's minds. Like Drummond in Edinburgh, they are sick with the discovery of men's sins, and wonder how God bears it. Like Livingstone, in the heart of the great Continent, they are agonised by the sight of its "open sore." All men who have these deep-seeing eyes, and these tender hearts, stand with John looking right into the misery and apathy of his fellow-countrymen, and like him they have this aureole of sorrow.

But this sorrow of the noble in spirit is not only the sorrow they take, but the sorrow they are given. It may not be entirely accurate for all, but there is truth in the thought that most noble lives are given a dower of sorrow at the hands of God. There are some lives on whose path light lies all the way. There are men whose touch turns everything to gold. There are some who seem to pass on to a

higher prosperity at every decade. We all know the faces which are flushed with success. The shadows that fall upon them are few and transient, and never such as wither the sinew or break the life in two. But the noblest do not walk in unshadowed paths. This truth that some of the noblest spirits are dowered with sorrow by God could be illustrated from almost every biography. Newman has an impressive sermon which he entitles "Scripture: a record of human sorrow." In his own simple austerity of speech he points out not only that the pages of Scripture are a transcript of the pain and misery of men, but that all the great saints, Abraham, and Jacob, and Gideon, and Samuel, and David, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Amos, and Hosea, and John, right up to the Man of Sorrows, were given this portion by God. I know no truer modern instance of this than is to be found in the life of Sister Dora. Her aureole was a blending of both kinds of sorrow. When some charged her with carrying the burdens of others too heavily, she wrote, "I tried to put myself in the place of these poor men, to see with their eyes, and to feel their wants and their difficulties as they were my very own." That is the sorrow of insight and sympathy. In later years, when loneliness and disappointment rose like a tide upon her, and doubt as to the wisdom of her life assailed her, and the most dreadful disease that human lips can name, sapped her life before her years had reached their meridian, she was given that

dower of sorrow which is of God. She writes, "I can't pray. I can't think. I sadly feel I shall be lost. I can only trust."¹ So I am persuaded it always is with the children of the Father. All the noblest, and bravest, and wisest, all who walk in the garments which are always white in God's eyes, have around their brows, to their perfecting for service and in character, this aureole of sorrow.

The third message is that *true greatness is greatness of soul*. Of no other did Jesus speak so fully and with such unstinted praise as of John the Baptist. His was the only full-length portrait Jesus ever painted. He sets him first in the rank of great men. "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." He declares that in spiritual power, in spiritual reach and grasp, in spiritual attainment, no human soul, before his day, stood so high as John the Baptist. Abraham may have had a more daring faith. Moses may have been endowed with a larger mind and a loftier conception of righteousness. David had a power of music which John could not touch. Isaiah had a tenderer rapture. Elijah had a nobler eloquence and a more dauntless bearing. Yet, in nobility of soul, John the Baptist stands above them all. "The least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." He is greater as the schoolboy of to-day is greater than any thinker who pondered life and its issues in the dim light of

¹ Cf. *Life*, pp. 120, 224.

pagan knowledge. He is greater as a little child who sings his Christmas hymn is greater than that impassioned genius who wrote, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." But for sublime greatness of soul John stands supreme. No other ever stood John's test. No other was able to cry, with his dim light, and without having seen the cross and the tomb, "He must increase, but I must decrease." No other ever was so utterly emptied of self. That is the perfect test of greatness of soul. How few of us who have seen Jesus, and know Him to be the Lord as John did not, are able to be so entirely heedless of our ease, and our name, and our future, if only Christ be king!

In a most interesting book, issued a few days ago, there is an account of an artisan missionary, William Waddell, who joined M. Colliard's mission on the Zambesi.¹ He gave ten years of constant sacrifice to the mission. Never a robust man, often weakened by fever, sometimes hardly able to stand upon his feet, he toiled on amid the steamy swamps of the Zambesi. He saw building after building rising up under his hands. He saw rude savages becoming devout believers under his influence and skilled workmen under his training. He saw the wilderness blossoming as the rose. His heart-filling joy was about to be crowned by love and marriage, when leprosy struck him. He came home to the agony

¹ Cf. *An Artisan Missionary on the Zambesi*, by Rev. John MacConnachie.

of seventeen years of pain. In those years the loathsome disease spread its touch of death over every member of his body, and conquered all but his spirit. A visitor who went to see him, wrote, "As he sat there, a man in the prime of life, crippled, helpless, blind, and suffering constant pain, an involuntary question sprung to one's lips at the thought of what that living sacrifice had been, 'Tell me, do you never regret it?' 'Never! Yes, and if it was to be done over again, knowing well what it was to cost, I would do it and count it an honour for the sake of serving Christ.'" That is greatness of soul.

XXI

CHRIST IN A WORLD OF PAIN

“And when they were come to the multitude, there came to Him a certain man, kneeling down to Him, and saying, Lord, have mercy on my son.”—MATT. xvii. 14.

YOU are all familiar with Raphael's glowing conception of the Transfiguration of Christ. He has daringly painted two pictures in a single space. In the upper half of the picture we see Christ with His shining face and His glistening garments, while Moses and Elias pay Him homage, and Peter and James and John fall prostrate at His feet. In the lower part of the picture we are shown the scene at the foot of the mountain—the baffled disciples, the mocking scribes, the pressing and staring multitude, and, in the foreground, the anguished father with his epileptic child. The painter's purpose is to emphasise that strange contrast, so often seen in Christ's experience, between the hours of spiritual rapture and the hours of struggle with the strife and care and sorrow of life. In a single glance we see the ineffable splendour and serene felicity of the mountaintop, and the misery and tears of the busy ways of men.

But this thought of the contrast between the heavenly peace of the mountain-top and the fretting and discord and burden at its foot, so fascinating to art and so appealing to our own experience, is not the thought of the evangelists. They see not a contrast, but a sequence. It is to them a sequence as natural as noontide is to dawn, as the day of toil is to the quiet night of rest. They show us Jesus coming down from His transfiguring hour with the secret of His cross locked in His heart. They record the quiet talk by the way. They bid us mark Him entering into the midst of the excited multitude. But His state is kingly still. It is the same Jesus, whose face was illumined by light from within, passing on, in as noble a moral beauty and as divine a power, to stand in the midst of the strife and pain of the world. There are two transfigurations. There is the transfiguration in prayer, when the soul sends its flush in illumining power to the brow. There is the transfiguration in service, when all the tender and self-denying emotions of the heart flood the face with love light. We see the one in the transfiguration of the mother who prays for her little child. The other transfiguration was seen by the men who lay on their sleepless beds of pain in the hospital of Scutari, when Florence Nightingale passed with her lamp through their wards in the night watches, ministering to their needs. Against the dark background of human pain these evangelists see the glory of Christ as clearly as in the light of

the open heaven. They see Christ coming to the multitude and proving Himself the Master of its pain.

When we read this story of this epileptic and devil-possessed child, we find that we are reading an epitome of the pain of humanity. There is the torture of the writhing body and the disorder of the mind whose sweet reason is overthrown. There is the spectacle of a soul held and driven by the dominion of evil. There is the shadowed home of the child, with those long years of broken-hearted shame and agonising exposure. There is the despairing father, loving his child the more tenderly for his affliction, and wounded in the marrow of his heart. There is the wonder and crude pity and bewildered questioning of the multitude. There are the baffled would-be healers of the distraught boy. All, that can be packed into the word pain, of torture, and anguish, and perplexity is summed up in this graphic picture of the gnashing child and the father's tears and the multitude's wondering sorrow. Let us see how Christ bears Himself in a world of pain.

I. Mark, to begin with, *Christ's keen consciousness of pain*. The world was very beautiful to Jesus. He entered with zest into the glory of earth and sea and sky. The rich green flush of the meadows caught His eyes with a swift thrill of joy, and He saw the lilies spreading the earth with scarlet, and He marked the sparrows building in the eaves. He

had stood silent as He watched the coming of the dawn and looked into the splendour of the setting sun. Home, love, friendship made Him glad. But through it all He heard the cry of pain, now low, moaning, and hopeless, and again wailing and shrieking in agony. A master of music will hear and be tortured by a single insistent discord. A compassionate heart will pass by the stately buildings of a great city when his eyes have been caught by the misery of its poor. A traveller in Central Africa will be withdrawn from the marvels of lake and river, of forest and swamp, when he sees the white trail of bleaching bones which marks the slave-trader's track. So Jesus moved in this world of beauty and light with a keen consciousness of pain. He never came to a multitude without being touched by its sorrow. His portrait as He looks out on any crowd of men has been drawn for us in a single line, "Jesus, moved with compassion." Here He comes to this multitude, marks the surging of the crowd, sees the taunting scribes, looks with vexation and weariness on His powerless and downcast disciples, and He has His keen consciousness of pain. But when the father brings his child to Him all else is forgotten. With eyes soft with pity, in gentle question, and with keen appeal, He bends Himself to the healing of the child. So Christ moved in a world of sorrow. He saw the leper by the wayside and never ceased to bear his disease. He heard the cry of the blind when others passed them by. He

felt the touch of the woman in the thronging crowd. He stood to gaze upon the man blind from his birth at the door of the temple with a sigh in His heart. He marked the widow weeping by her son's bier. He saw the hungering, wistful, wandering crowd as sheep without a shepherd. He looked upon a city hasting all unaware to its doom, and was moved to tears. He saw not merely the pain and the sorrow which all men's eyes might have marked. He saw into the depths of men's souls, away behind their callous faces and high looks and stoical pose. He saw how surely the bravest and proudest come to the hour of agony, and how universal is the crown of sorrow. Never did morning wear to evening but Christ's heart did break.

II. Mark, in the second place, *Christ's acceptance of pain*. To see Jesus moving in the midst of a world of pain, keenly conscious of it and yet forbearing to heal, is, at first sight, both a marvel and a mystery. There were many widows in Israel who mourned for their children, but the Son of man did not regard Himself as sent to them. There were many lepers who prayed for cleansing, but Christ did not heal them. There were more sisters than Martha and Mary who wept beside their brother's grave, but Christ had no word for them. There were lame and halt and blind in every village through which Jesus passed, but they were lame and halt and blind to the last chapter of their lives.

The mystery of pain which burdens so many tender minds to-day is darkest when we think of Christ. We wonder why God permits so much suffering. We grow chill in heart when we recall our unanswered prayers. We almost revolt when we see that the noblest and gentlest and bravest spend so many years of anguish. When we stop to listen to the cries of neglected and piteously wronged children, to the sobs of fear and loneliness and bereavement, to the muttered exclamations of tortured men crushed amid merciless machineries, to the groans of the wounded and dying on the field of battle, we wonder how God bears the burden of it. When we think of the silent and nameless sorrows of men and women who dare not tell us why they suffer, we cry, "My God, my God, why——?" But Christ has no outcry at pain. He did ask, once, and once only, "My God, My God, why——?" but it was why God had forsaken Him, not why He suffered. To Christ there was neither marvel nor mystery in sorrow. He was marked by a quiet acceptance of pain.

There are three reasons why Jesus accepted pain. The first is, that in a world like ours, under the laws of a moral governor, and full of living creatures with exquisite and delicate nerves, and keen and tender senses, and hearts that can love and sorrow, pain is inevitable. Pain is the swift and wise and necessary consequence of the breaking of God's law. Whenever, either in ignorance, or by accident, or by careless disobedience, or by gross and wilful wrong-doing,

God's law is broken, pain follows as closely and inescapably as a shadow. A wild beast treads carelessly, while he crouches for his prey, upon a thorn. The keen dart of pain tells him of his folly. A little child touches the glowing ribs of the grate. The instant burn is never forgotten. A man builds a wall with untempered mortar, or drives a rivet slackly home, or lights a match in a mine, and there is a harvest of agony of which he may never know. A man trifles once and once only with the law of self-restraint. Before the morning light he is touched by the wounding finger of pain. It could not be otherwise. Pain is the hedge by which God guards His narrow way. Pain is the angel with the drawn sword which keeps the way of the tree of life. Pain is the goad which compels men to a carefulness they would not take, and to toils they would not endure. The upward climb of the race, and its conquest of earth and sea and sky, with its constant advance in knowledge and power and skill, is greatly motivated by pain. But for this sharp stroke of pain, men might sink back into the slime.

The second reason why Jesus accepted pain is that He realised its beneficent office. Pain is not only the angel with the drawn sword, but the prophet whose voice no man can neglect. There are some men and women who have had little pain. They have inherited superb physical strength, a comely beauty, and a full share of mental ability. They have ample wealth and high station. They have

never known the feeling of want, or had any anxiety about to-morrow's bread. Their minds are untroubled and their sleep is sweet. But these are never men and women of a high and noble and tender spirit. They do not see visions nor dream dreams. Their voices are never tremulant with hope and joy in God. You must go to some poor stricken creature who has long companied with pain to mark the wide horizon of patient thought, to hear the noble music of an enlightened heart, and to enter a world of which the coarse Philistine had never dreamed. God could not work His will in us without this ministry of pain.

The third reason why Christ accepted pain gives us a deeper insight into the mind of God. Pain does not always chasten the sufferer. It sometimes hardens and embitters. It sometimes clouds the spirit and overthrows the mind. But there is one office it never fails to fulfil. It keeps men's hearts tender and pitiful and patient. If the world were full only of men and women who were all young and pulsing in health, self-sufficient in their strength, and unburdened in their thoughts, life would be almost intolerable. If there were no little children laid in their helplessness as burdens on our hearts, and no weak and old and ailing and helpless, and no sick and tortured, broken-hearted and dying, this world would be an arena in which the cruellest passions would rise in pitiless struggle. We have only to hear the cry of a lost child, or to enter a home where one lies long years

on a bed of sickness wondering at God's strange ways, or to see a strong man smitten by some stroke which makes those who love him care for him with tender offices, to realise that pain with its solemn, unsmiling, and sometimes deeply lined face, is a great servant of God. It has created our compassions, chastened our sympathies, purged us of our hardness and apathy and selfishness. It has wrought out in men a great part of the beauty of holiness. Christ saw this noble discipline on human character; and He accepted pain.

III. Mark, in the third place, *Christ's deliverance from pain*. "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away," sang the Old Testament prophet, and the New Testament poet makes his response, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." The day is coming when God shall no longer need the ministry of pain. But that day cannot come until all the causes of pain have been removed. Christ came not to cleanse the leper's scab, nor to make every lame man walk, nor to call back the dead from the grave, nor to wipe the tears from all the faces that He met. He would not have forgone His own hours of weeping. He came to deliver men from pain by quenching the bitter sources from which its streams issued. He came to redeem the

world from that curse, of which pain is only one consequence.

“He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.
He comes with succour speedy
To those who suffer wrong,
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong.
To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light
Whose souls, condemned and dying,
Were precious in His sight.”

He came to vanquish the wrong, and to cancel the long inheritance of evil which lies behind all pain. When every wicked passion has been cast out, when men are living in a willing obedience to the law of God, when every wilful thought has been brought into captivity with Christ, when no prejudice can keep us back from knowing God's will, and no passion from doing it, then pain, which is but the sting of sin, shall be no more.

Mark Jesus, in the light of this ruling truth, dealing with this tormented child. What lay behind this writhing and foaming and gnashing of teeth? What lies, either immediately or remotely, behind every torture that flesh or spirit have known. It is surely some spirit of evil. “Thou deaf and dumb spirit, I charge thee come out of him.” When the spirit had departed, the pain had passed. That is how, then and always, Christ delivers from pain. When Christ has cast out from men's hearts

the evil spirit of greed, the sweating den, the mean street, the miserable home, the drink trade, the opium traffic, and all the wrongs which have so constant and so awful a consequence of pain shall all have passed away. When Christ has cast out the evil spirit of lust, the wrongs of womanhood, the curse of manhood, and the tell-tale marks on the bodies of little children will no more be known. When Christ has cast out the evil spirit of ambition there will be no tale of the victims of the war to count, and the widow and the orphan of the soldier will no longer be seen. When Christ casts out of men's hearts the evil spirit of gluttony and drunkenness, fewer women will weep, fewer men be racked with disease, fewer babes be born in shame, to live brief lives of weakness and misery. When Christ has cast out the evil spirit of pride and envy and jealousy, scorn will no longer make men bitter, and callous contempt no longer make them sad. Christ delivers from pain not by any anodyne; He robs it of its keenest edge, He quenches it by casting out the evil spirits who cause it.

IV. Mark, in the fourth place, *Christ's commission to His people of a ministry to pain*. One of the first commands given by Christ was to heal the sick. It is plain that He expected that His disciples would have cast out this evil spirit. His reproach to them is the measure in His keenness of His disappointment at their failure. It reveals that the reason of their

impotence was the ebbing of their faith. They could not cast the spirit out because they had lost the assurance and conviction that God was with them. That reproach of Christ smites us all. There are evils we could combat and overcome. There are wrongs we could redress. There are curses we could remove, if only we believed. The pain of the world could be lessened at least by one-half in a single week if only Christian men faced the ill-doing of our time in the strength of self-denying faith. The Greathearts of our time who have freed the slave, rescued the lost, dried the widow's tears, and cared for the orphan, have all been men and women of invincible faith. In his *Castles in the Air*, Stubbs tells the story of Miss Jones, the superintendent of the Liverpool Workhouse Hospital, who had heard Christ's commission, and wrought out in her obedience the miracle of the healing of pain.

"A simple woman, weak, but strong in God,
And Christ's great Gospel, told unto the poor,
God's poor and dying on their pauper beds;
Told not alone in wholesome words of good,
But preacht by tender hands upon the brow,
And hovering tendance, calm and sweetly still.

To many a foundering soul she stretched
The hand of help: and from her eyes they caught
The light of Heaven, that brightens into hope,
The sinner's hope, from Him, the Crucified."

When Christ has such servants we shall have reached the eve of that day in which there shall be no more pain.

XXII

THE OMNIPOTENCE OF FAITH

"All things are possible to him that believeth."—MARK ix. 23.

"If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."—MATT. xvii. 20.¹

WHEN Paul maintained the pre-eminence of love over faith and hope he was remembering His Lord. He recalled the word of Jesus to the woman who was a sinner, which awoke a music in her heart whose echoes shall never die away. He saw the exquisite beauty of the deed of Mary of Bethany when her love poured the spikenard on Christ's head. He heard the conversation of the upper room, when Christ commended love as the source of all noble service. He recollected that Christ's last question, and His highest requirement from His foremost disciple, was, "Lovest thou Me?" The picture he frames within the rhythmic 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians, of love "which suffers

¹ This text may have been interpolated here from another incident. It is of no consequence. It only makes vivid what Jesus had already said, and it expresses the thought enshrined in the story.

long and is kind," is simply an etching of Christ. Yet Paul well knew that faith has its own primacy. It is not love but faith that makes a Christian. Christ's first demand, what He regards as the indispensable thing, is faith. Love is the fruit which faith bears, the atmosphere which faith creates, the passion which faith purifies. In one of the frescoes on the walls of the Vatican the relationship of the three graces has been finely drawn. Love stands, with tender glances and kindly offices, in the midst of weakness and need. Hope lifts her face heavenward in prophetic desire. But both lean on faith, who clasps patiently and tenderly and inseparably the cross on which her Master died.

When Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration to the multitude, He came into touch at once with the world's sorrow. There never is a multitude but there is sorrow. But Christ's second and more saddening contact was with the world's unbelief. Unbelief is always of two kinds. The first which met Christ was the unbelief of men whose faith had failed, whose healing power had ebbed. "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" is His sigh of vexation and weariness. The second unbelief was that of a man without Christ. The father of the epileptic child knew little more than Christ's name and His fame as a healer of the sick. To both of these unbelievers

He proclaimed the omnipotence of faith. "All things are possible to him that believeth," He said to the anguished father as He touched the springs of a new faith in his heart. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed," He said, sadly enough to His disciples, "ye shall say unto this mountain Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Now what is faith? The master-teacher on the question of faith is the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews. His definition has been convincingly rendered in the American edition of the Revised New Testament. "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." Faith is an assurance and a conviction which becomes a personal trust and a confidence, and issue in a life of absolute and daring commitment to the will of God. The sign and proof of faith is this, that at the word of God it goes out not knowing whither it goes; it obeys without counting the cost. Christian faith is simply that faculty of the soul which we use in everyday life turned towards God revealed in Jesus Christ. A working woman accompanied by her little child came to the kerb-stone of a thronged and crowded thoroughfare along which the traffic of a great city was passing. The little child had been clinging to her mother's skirts. But when she saw the rush of van, and dray, and motor, and heard the roar and grinding of their wheels, her little heart failed her at the

thought of crossing to the other side. With an instinctive confidence her hand stole up and touched her mother's, and the larger, stronger hand clasped the little feeble, appealing fingers, and held them in a secure and tenacious grasp. The shadow of fear upon the child's face vanished, and she stepped out with her mother in a quiet confidence. That is faith. It is an assurance of a strength and a help, a conviction of a love and a care. It is an assurance that there is strength and help in God, and a conviction that He loves and cares. These baffled disciples had lost the assurance of God's strength and help. This despairing father, whose child lay writhing before him, had no conviction of God's love and care. When this assurance and conviction were born within them both, things that seemed impossible became the certainties of experience. They learned the omnipotence of faith.

When we analyse this power of faith it resolves itself into three elements. It is vision. It is receptivity. It is victory. Or using simpler terms : it is the power to see, the power to receive, and the power to overcome. Let us take these three in order.

I. In the first place : *Faith is vision.*

By vision is meant that power to see and to interpret and to realise a world beyond the ken of our senses. It is not to be contrasted with knowledge, for it is a knowledge of the spirit. It is not to be set against reason, for faith is the only

reasonable and the only sane attitude of the soul. It is not to be considered as an assent to certain statements or arguments, or a submission to articles of belief. Faith is always vision, which sees, and is assured of, a person. It believes that God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. Its great contrast is with sight. It beholds what is denied to other eyes. It sees Him who is invisible. It looks at the unseen and the eternal.

Now it is faith as vision which is saving faith. There is always life for a look, and there is life no otherwise but by a look. In the hour when a deep assurance of God and His love, and a sure conviction of Christ and His redeeming cross, become the possession of the soul, we see these as realities, and we pass into that acceptance of God's mercy and trust in His grace which is the first experience in salvation. This experience may differ in its circumstances, and in its memorable words, and in its emotion. But whether in the case of a man like Abraham, or in that of the last poor sin-haunted reprobate who has entered into peace, it is always an assurance and a conviction of the love and grace and forgiveness of God seen in a moment of vision. The witnesses of all the ages speak on this point with one voice. But if any one would have present-day proofs of this power of faith as vision, he has only to take up the last Christian biography to find the story told again. Or he may read the records of

the mission in St. James's Hall in Piccadilly as these are inscribed in the life of Hugh Price Hughes. There he will read of men who came in hollow-eyed with defeat, sullen and bitter with hatred of God and His law, who had their moment of vision, and rose up to declare their assurance of His presence and His love, and went out to keep His commandments. He will read of women who had lost all sense of God, and were growing sick at heart in the hard struggle of life, and were about to plunge into sin, who had their moment of vision, and knelt in peace at the Father's feet. He will read of the girl who came to report the preacher's words as a mere exercise in shorthand, and sat at first with scoffing comment on his message. But she had her moment of vision, and she remained to pray to the God whose wings were overshadowing her. He will read of the graduate who had lived heedlessly and self-indulgently for over twenty years, but having been aroused and enlightened, in his moment of vision he saw God in Christ and found joy and peace in believing. We are saved from first to last in every step of the way by that faith which is vision.

There is one peculiarly tender incident of the work in this St. James's Mission which is full of light. A poor girl who was living an evil life was wandering down St. James's Street about midnight. She was ill, spent with weakness, wasted through hunger, hopelessly sodden in her thought. The

paint on her cheeks could not hide her ghastly pallor. She had lost all faith in man and all hope in God. But one of the sisters, set apart for this rescue work, marked her as she shambled along. Going up to her, she put her arms round the poor tottering creature, and kissed her. "Who are you?" "Are you an angel?" came in short breathless gasps. She was taken to the two rooms which these rescue sisters keep open all night. She was nursed back to health. As she lay in quiet and in peace she realised that the angels of God had indeed met her by the way, and in her moment of vision her weak and fluttering faith went out toward Him. She had the assurance and the conviction which is the faith that saves.

II. In the second place: *Faith is receptivity.*

Faith not only sees, but it also receives. As we attain assurance and conviction our whole being, our heart and conscience and will, our mind, and even our body, receive the energy of God. This receptivity of faith is one of the overlooked, or at least under-estimated, facts in Christian experience. The evangelist is quite aware of its truth, and yet he fails to emphasise it. It seems too high and too mystic to the ordinary believer. It leads us into mysteries for which many have no care. Yet it is really as simple and as natural as most of the tenderer and sweeter and more potent experiences of life.

Look at the truth of the receptivity of faith in its familiar aspects. How much inspiration and courage and hope, and how much healing and vitality, is continually passing from man to man! That is a certainty to which every student who has been intellectually quickened sets his seal. In his formative and plastic youth he came under the influence of some teacher whom he learned to trust, and of whose good-will and eager desire to help he gained assurance. That teacher's word awoke his dull and dormant mind, and quickened his sluggish energies. To be with him, to hear him speak, and to catch the kindling light in his eye was to find that the teacher's virtue was passing into the scholar. Carlyle has told us that he spent ten absorbing days in reading Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*. At their close the spirit of Gibbon, his zeal for knowledge, his love of large and far-seeing generalisations, and his power of visualising the scenes of the past, became in some measure the possession of his reader. In simpler and in swifter fashion we know how the spirit of a general on the field of battle will animate and renerve every regiment of his line. In that deeper world of spiritual experience the receptivity of faith comes to the fulness of its power. Most men and women believe in man before they believe in God. Little children gain first an assurance and a conviction of their father's wisdom and their mother's love, and through these they pass to faith in God. The awaking of a young soul, and

the rising up within him of zeal and of desire, are usually due to some strong personality in whom he whole-heartedly believes. Faith is a subtle contagion. As he comes into contact with the man or woman he trusts the words spoken sink down into his heart, the prayers uttered become the liturgy of his petitions, the hopes which are his leader's motives make the young disciple's face to shine. There were men and women who felt that M'Cheyne's spiritual passion passed from him into their souls. There were devout believers who made long and costly journeys that they might be reconsecrated by an hour in Spurgeon's presence. There were students trembling under their temptations who felt that Henry Drummond's influence was the elixir of life to their wills. His unfaltering loyalty and intense purity seemed to run along the chords of their being. Who has not known the man or woman, humble in station, undistinguished in gift, and yet so filled with the Spirit of God that to spend one hour with them was to receive a new energy for righteousness into the soul?

But no man however wise and however godly can be to his fellow-man what Christ is to His people. When we trust Him we lay ourselves soul and spirit and body before Him, and His divine energy floods our being. We receive because we believe, and we receive according to our faith. We understand how all things are possible to him that believeth. As we trust and open out our

nature to Him, we receive new life into our dying souls, new strength into our flagging wills, new vigour into our drooping thoughts, new power into our withered faculties. We can receive new vitality not only into our soul and our spirit, but into our body. This is the truth which Christian Science has been feeling after, although it has stumbled on its very threshold. It is not God's way to work needless miracles. It is not His will to prevent our suffering when we break His laws. It is not Christ's way to keep us from dashing our foot against the stone if we fling ourselves from some pinnacle in self-will. It is not God's will to heal all our sorrows and to quench all our pain. God has a message in sorrow and a ministry in pain. Neither sorrow nor pain are evil. It is the sin behind them that burdens God's heart. But it is an incontestable fact, which even a sceptical science has begun to realise, that a healing and renewing energy from Christ can pass, not only into the soul and the spirit, but into the body of the man who trusts Him. He receives his healing because he believes. Only in the atmosphere of faith can Christ work His miracles of healing. The word of power that raised this paralytic child became effectual through his father's faith. Virtue goes out of Christ into those who touch with faith only the hem of His garment. The noblest virtue of all, the virtue of the Holy Spirit of God, is received only in hours of intense vision and perfect trust.

When Christ is present with a company of such believers, He says unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and through the open gates of the soul that transforming and renewing presence passes within. As we cast out all that defiles the temple, as we lift up its doors, as we wait and pray in an assurance and a conviction of God's presence and power, we find that faith is receptivity.

III. In the third place: *Faith is victory.*

We are touching a simpler and more evident truth when we say that faith is the power to overcome. No man can do anything which is worth doing unless he has a modest and yet assured faith in himself. Athletes know that when the runner on the track loses faith in his power to maintain the pace he is a beaten man. The surgeon who has not a calm assurance and a clear conviction that he can use his lancet with an untrembling hand had better not use it at all. Even for others to believe in a man gives him an element of power. As we rise in the scale, and enter moral and spiritual worlds, the omnipotence of faith is more evident, and its victories more splendid. For a man to believe in a cause and in its ultimate triumph is to find himself half-way to its attainment. Mazzini was the one man who had faith in the people of Italy, in the justice and certainty of their national unity, and in their power to reach that freedom through which it could be attained. In the long and costly,

and sometimes doubtful struggle, it was Mazzini's faith, more than the soldier's chivalry or the statesman's polity, which gained the victory. Even for a man to believe only in righteousness, to believe that it is a high duty to be honest and just and true and pure, endows him with a power which all men recognise. There are men among us who do not profess Christ's name. They have never bowed down in exalting adoration before the unseen. But they believe in righteousness at all cost and hazard, and their names stand for honesty and liberty and truth, and they are men of power.

"This is the victory which overcometh the world," writes John, "even our faith." There lies the noblest victory of the men who believe. To John and to his generation, and to all men who have had the vision of God, the world is the blinding, seducing, terrifying reality. By the world, John does not mean the realm of earth and sea and sky, or the things which God hath made beautiful in their season. He does not mean the world of men and women, with their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears. That is the world God loves. By the world John meant that merely earthly order and fashion and mode of life, with its hates, greeds, foul habits, and dark mutinies against goodness and truth. It was that pagan world in which he lived, sometimes lovely in its forms of passion, often alluring in its fascination, but always deadly to the purities and simplicities of the soul. It was

that world which Demas loved, and for whose indulgences he became a deserter. That world we face when we go down to our businesses, enter into our pleasures, suffer our trials and losses, meet our scornings and our disappointments. The man who has had his moment of vision, who receives in every hour the energy of God's Holy Spirit, will face its temptations, endure its trials, and he will overcome. We may feel ourselves far from the attainment of this victory. We conquer it in proportion as we believe. We might say, as the great believers have said, to the mountain which seems to hinder the coming of the kingdom of God and to blot out the very light of heaven, "Be thou removed," and it would be removed. All the splendid achievements and all the victory over the wrong, and the tyranny, and the cruelty of the past, however strongly these have been entrenched, have been gained by men of faith. Nothing has been impossible to them. But only One has gotten Him the faultless victory. That One is Jesus, the beginner and the consummator of faith, who endured the Cross, and despised its shame, and is now set down, in the victor's place, at the right hand of God.

XXIII

THE ENERGY OF PRAYER

“And He said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer.”—MARK ix. 29.

THE sun was risen upon the earth when Jesus came down from the mount. It was broad forenoon when He, with His three disciples, reached the place of their retreat. In the East the day's activity begins with the dawn. He found the quiet spot of their rest invaded by an excited multitude. In the midst stood the other disciples humiliated and mortified by their failure to cast out the evil spirit which possessed the epileptic child. When He had healed the boy and the crowd had departed, His disciples asked Him privately, “Why could not we cast him out?” Christ's reply touches one of the deepest mysteries of the religious life. “This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer.” It proclaims that prayer is a force in the universe, and that the blessedness of mankind is bound up with the prayers of God's people. That seemed so difficult and transcendent a statement to the earlier transcribers of the Gospel, that they added the words “and

fasting" to Christ's brief saying. They conceived that this tremendous power could be received only after some stern and self-denying discipline of the body and the soul. In the Revised Version this ascetic gloss has been removed. Jesus declared that great things are wrought by prayer alone.

Most men find themselves at different times in two sharply contrasted moods towards prayer. In one mood prayer is our easy, inevitable, and most natural speech. When a man is walking with God it is his irresistible impulse to speak with Him. When we are certain of God's presence we do not hesitate to ask Him to work in us, and to work for us, and to work through us. Or when we are in the depths of sorrow or of shame, prayer is our almost involuntary cry. The severer studies of the anthropologists have proved that there is no land in which men do not call upon an unseen power in their want and fear and pain. "De Profundis" is a psalm of the universal heart. However a man may ignore God when his boat is sailing on an even keel, what time his heart is overwhelmed he cries to be led to the rock that is higher than he. Prayer is always a necessity. At other times it becomes a delight.

But in the other mood prayer becomes a mystery and an effort. The difficulties seem so dark and insuperable that our very breath is caught when we attempt to pray. So many petitions seem to remain unanswered. The reign of law in the universe seems

so absolute that the mind cannot reach any certainty that an answer to prayer is even a possibility. Why should a weak and sobbing human cry check the stars in their courses? The most deadening and disheartening barrier lies in the moral difficulty. Why should a man require to pray to a loving and merciful God? A man that is a father does not wait till the child who is lying on a bed of pain cries out for his sympathy and his healing. A man that is merciful does not wait till he hears the bleat of his sheep which he has lost. When our poor human hearts love they do not wait to be importuned that they may supply the needs of their dear ones. Why should prayer on the part of man be the indispensable condition of the working of God? We may receive some answers to these and other questions which trouble us if we take up, as simply as possible, this deep word of Jesus. "This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer." How is prayer an energy for God?

I. In the first place, *prayer makes us more deeply conscious of God.* In the rush and stress of life, and never more than in these days when the song of speed is on every man's tongue, we tend to lose a sure and clear consciousness of God. It is not that men disbelieve in God. The atheist is unknown. A generation ago he slipped back from the proud and defiant standpoint of the unbeliever to the more diffident position of the agnostic. Never was faith

in God and a submission to the authority of Christ so unquestioning as to-day. But in this busy and engrossing world, when the mind is filled every morning with all the news of the ends of the earth, and the interest of the heart is held, as the eyes are held by a drama on the stage, God falls out of men's thoughts. If men will not sometimes think of God, He will become merely a name to them. If they glance toward Him only now and again, and with an unobservant and undesiring eye, He will become strange and shadowy, and will remain unknown. We do not become sure of God by mustering up the arguments for His being and His purpose in the world. No heart ever stood up in a passionate conviction of God's presence because it had been told that His footprints were marked upon the rocks. No mind was ever driven by the logic of history to assent with a deep persuasion to the personal providence of the Almighty. These things have their place and their power. They are by-ways of evidence in which a believing heart will sometimes walk. But the only certainty which can satisfy the mind and stir the heart is an ethical and a religious, a moral and a spiritual consciousness of God. Faith is an opening of the eyes that we may see. It is in prayer that we rise most swiftly and most convincingly into this faith which sees. It is in prayer that we have the sure consciousness of God. Even although a man may kneel with a haze over his mind and a chill upon his spirit, he will not kneel

in vain. Sailors have called out of the mist and fog as their vessel has approached some hidden shore. They did not know how far off the cliffs were which were marked upon their chart. Still they called, and as the responding hail came back, they knew that eyes were watching and hearts were beating for them. In the same way men become sure of God when they pray to Him. Mark the result! To have a clear consciousness of God is to be filled with power.

II. In the second place, *prayer brings us into sympathy with the mind of God*. It is a sad commonplace that there are evils unnoticed, wrongs unremedied, poor unpitied and unhelpt, miserable uncomforted, not because men do not know, but because they do not sympathise. Their eyes look out daily on scenes of poverty and of pain. Their ears are filled with the cries of those who suffer. But they do not seem to see or to hear, because their hearts have not been touched to sympathy. Travellers in Africa all dwell on the callous way in which a band of bearers look upon one of their number who is carrying his load in utter exhaustion. They will leave him behind them on the trail, well aware that next day his bones will be bleaching in the sun. They will obey any command to care for him with a sulky discontent. They will meet the order to carry him almost with rebellion. There was a day when Christian teachers heard the cry from the

regions beyond and yet gave it no heed. To this day men are told of the darkness and degradation, the fear and the whispering dread, the torture of body and of mind, the infamy of life and of spirit, which prevails over large tracts of Asia and of Africa, and they listen unmoved. The cries of children, the sobs of widowed hearts, and the sighs of over-driven men fall upon some men's ears as they take their ease, and yet leave them cold. Ever and again some great soul rises who sees and hears with a new throb of sympathy. He sees right into the misery of the pain and wrong. He sees all the iniquity which is the spring of these bitter streams. With George Müller of Bristol and other like-minded men he hears the cry of the children. With William Carey and his long line of noble fellow-labourers he feels the burden of those who walk in darkness. With William Clarkson he is afflicted with the wrongs of the slave. He stands as a prophet of God to his generation. But what is the source of his sympathy? Whence came the light of his seeing? "With Thee is the fountain of life; and in Thy light we shall see light clearly." Every one of these leaders in the philanthropies and redemptions have been men of prayer. As they have continued in prayer they have come to learn the mind of Christ. They have begun to think His thoughts. They have become one with Him in spirit. He has lived and breathed within them. As the tide of sympathy with the mind of God has

risen in their soul while they prayed, they were endued with the power of God.

Trench has set this change from dull and callous heedlessness to keen desire in his sonnet, which, though so well known, I cannot forbear from repeating—

“ Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in Thy presence will prevail to make,
What heavy burdens from our bosoms take,
What parched grounds refresh, as with a shower !
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower ;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear :
We kneel, how weak, we rise, how full of power.
Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others—that we are not always strong,
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak and heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us in prayer,
And joy and strength and courage are with Thee ? ”

III. In the third place: *prayer surrenders us to the energy of God*. The highest attitude in prayer is not desire, nor aspiration, nor praise. It is surrender. In surrender we open our whole being to God as a flower opens itself to the sun, and we are filled, up to our measure, with His divine energy. It is because man can be filled with the fulness of God that he has been chosen of God as His instrument in the world. In one true sense God set bounds to His power when He created man. He placed a further limit on Himself when He committed dominion to him. God now works through man, and if man will not work the works

of God, the works of God remain undone. God might have peopled the world, as He has spread the stars through the heavens, by a word of command. He has chosen to people the world by one generation bringing forth another. If men will not replenish the earth it will remain as lonely as a wilderness. He might have chosen to make the earth a place of order and beauty by the breath of His Spirit. But He has put man into His garden to dress and to till it. If a man will not dress the garden it will become moor and fen. He might have committed the gospel to a dispensation of angels, or have written His message in letters of light on the midnight sky, or made every stone breathe forth a Memnon music of appeal with every morning light. But He has committed to men the ministry of reconciliation, and if they refuse to be God's ambassadors His gospel shall remain unknown.

There is a strange deep saying of the Old Testament, in which a psalmist charges the Hebrew people with limiting the Holy One of Israel. We limit God when we think meanly of Him and teach men an impoverished doctrine of His grace. We limit God when we will not keep His commandments and do His will. We limit God by every act of rebellion which blocks His way. But there is one way in which we limit God most effectually of all. That way is by our prayerlessness. Because we are not surrendered to God in

prayer, the might of His energy does not pass into us. Every faculty a man has, every talent God has given him, every fibre of his heart, and every cell in his brain, may be energised by the energy of God. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." Men whom others have despised, teachers whom the strong have scorned, humble and lowly and unlearned men and women have done great things for God, because they have been so surrendered to Him that His energy has been a swift dynamic in every faculty of body and of soul.

That truth is written in such large letters that one wonders why any man doubts the efficacy of prayer, or why so many men neglect it. It is always after ten days of prayer that Pentecost comes, and Peter stands up with new and amazing powers of exposition and of eloquence. In his surrender he has been filled with all the energy of God. We never come into close touch with any man who has led a revival, or been an instrument in the renewal of faith in multitudes of men, but we are impressed both by his personal weakness and his strange and mysterious strength. In his prayer of surrender he has been filled with the energy of God. The whole inwardness of this truth is written in the journal of John Wesley. For over twelve years he served in the ministry without power and without joy. But he came

to that day when in prayer he surrendered himself, and he was filled with the energy of God. His life thereafter was a daily yielding of himself to God. His journal, on almost every page, records his constant and daily touch with his Almighty Lover. On the first page of his diary he discloses the whole secret. He writes: "I resolved *Deo juvante*—(1) to devote an hour morning and evening to private prayer; no pretence or excuse whatever. (2) To converse with God; no lightness, no *εὐτραπελία*" (*i.e.* foolish talking). As with Wesley, all men who receive God's potent energy in prayer do great things for God.

IV. In the fourth place: *prayer works on the will of God*. No error has done more to paralyse our faith in prayer and to make the prayer of faith a wistful observance than the strange conception that God is fixed and inexorable law, if not even an iron and inflexible fate. There are many praying men who are fatalists in their heart. But God is not law, nor is He fate. God is will. The essential truth about will is this, that it is continually forming new plans, making fresh choices, and coming to unprophesied decisions. The common thought of God is that He is a personality bound hand and foot by His laws. The conception that lies behind much of the seemingly wise writing of many clever men is that God has no other laws than those we know, and no higher methods than those we use. But

God is a sovereign will with infinite resources. God's will as an eternal purpose in Christ cannot be finally thwarted. God's will as a fixed and steadfast purpose of grace shall be fulfilled. "I am the Lord, I change not." "God is not a man that He should lie, or the son of man that He should repent." As Bunyan writes in his rustic couplet—

"Whether to heaven or hell you tend,
God will have glory in the end."

But God's will, as Jesus tells us in the prayer He taught us to pray, is not always done. It is not His will that one of the little ones should perish, and yet the sighs of their dying hours ascend to His throne. His will is our sanctification, and yet our sanctification is not an actuality. Men can thwart His intentions, check His plans, block His way, both within their own souls and in the outer world of life. A man can resist His Holy Ghost. As a man can thwart and check the will of God, so also can he move that will and work on it to his blessing and his help. As he brings his desires and his will to bear on the will of God, he moves God, and alters His method and His ways. The issue is often seen in what men call miracles. But there are no miracles with God. Yet the answers to a human prayer are signs and wonders which seem to interrupt the course of nature, to divide the seas in their beds, and to keep the sun from going down.

This is the only scriptural conception of the will of God. Never did men guard so jealously against thinking of God as a man as did these Old Testament teachers. Yet they boldly say that God loves, and fears, and hopes, and joys, and sorrows, and repents of His methods, and changes His mode of dealing. With one voice they declare that God may be entreated, His anger turned away, and the course He has threatened left untravelled. Abraham does not doubt but that God can be turned aside from the destruction of Sodom. Moses does not doubt but that God can be led to take fresh pity on His disobedient people and keep their name in His book. Hezekiah is assured that the Lord will turn back the shadow of death. They are well aware that the whole truth lies in an infinite mystery beyond their power to fathom. But this they know, that their prayers are not empty and idle breath, but forces which can act on the mind and will of God. This they are confident of, that a man can wrestle with God and can prevail. The New Testament Scripture is equally emphatic in its testimony. Jesus is most daring of all, when again and again He urges men to an importunity which has power to change even the expressed mind of God. The importunity that Jesus demands is the bringing of the whole force of an eager will, in sympathy with God's inner purpose, to bear upon His will and His ways.

So then—pray! When your child is lying on a bed of sickness, and wise eyes look on him with a pitying hopelessness, still—pray! When weakness has smitten you, and you have the sentence of death in yourself, still—pray! When your business affairs are in confusion, and there seems no relief from disaster and shame, still—pray! When the heart of a once noble people seems to have become gross, and their ears are deaf to every appeal, still—pray! Who can tell whether God will be gracious to you? It may not be His will to grant your prayers. Your request may conflict with His eternal purpose of grace. He is the moral governor of the universe, and your request may stand right in the way of wisdom, if not of mercy and love. He is your Father, but He has a spiritual purpose towards you which may require the denial of much that seems to you your necessary good. He cannot grant all the prayers of His children, any more than you can grant all the prayers of yours. He may answer their purpose when He may seem to deny their request. He did not hear Abraham's prayer for Sodom, but He answered the heart-throb in it when He sent His angels to lay their hands on the wrists of Lot. He did not answer the prayers of the stricken hearts of Israel when they saw the days of the captivity coming upon them. But the enriching years of exile were a better gift than centuries of unblest and unenlightened prosperity in Jerusalem.

He did not grant Christ's appeal in Gethsemane, "Let this cup pass from Me." He gave Christ His cross. But He made the cross Christ's cup of delight for evermore. Prayer has power with the will of God.

"This kind can come forth by nothing save by prayer." Christ's words lie clearly in the light. Had these disciples been deeply conscious of God, had they been in sympathy with His mind, had they been surrendered to the inflow of His energy, and had they, in prayer, moved His will, they would have cast out the evil spirit from the epileptic child. They were impotent because they were prayerless. Yet we need not be at God for every trifle. The life of prayer we must always live. But there are wrongs we can redress, there are diseases we can heal, there are broken hearts we can comfort, by means God has placed already in our power. He has given us our talents and our aptitudes; He has given us His word of truth and His grace. He has given us our eyes, and our hands, and our voices, and our renewed and tender hearts. These we can use for Him. But when it comes to casting out the devils of men's hate and greed and sensual desire, and to the exorcising of the dark passions of the mutinous human heart—"this kind can come forth by nothing save by prayer." In this deadly strife it is Moses, with the upheld hands, and not Joshua, who wins the victory.

XXIV

LOST CHILDREN

“Master, I beseech Thee, look upon my son.”—LUKE ix. 38.

A LOST child is a deeply moving sight. Even in the busiest street a sympathising crowd will quickly gather around him. Men whose affairs are driving them on with remorseless haste will stop to question and to help. The tear-blotted face and the eager look round on the unknown questioners touch every heart. But there is a sorrow which is more pathetic than a lost child's desolation. There rises in the thought of some who pity the strayed little one the faces of those who have lost their child. They hear them calling with an ever more anxious note. They see them leaving everything else undone, forgetting weariness and hunger, speeding hither and thither, looking for their lost little one, thinking that some maiming accident has befallen him, or that even now he is lying tranced in death. The desolation of the lost child is a pale grief beside the parents' anguish. To lose a child in any sense of the words is always a peculiar sorrow, and as the lostness deepens in

spiritual meaning, it becomes a self-reproaching and unforgettable pain.

It may seem, at first reading, to be merely an incident that the first appeal for help made to Jesus when He came down from the mount was the cry of a father for his child. But, as we have seen, this whole story, told by Mark so fully and so circumstantially, is an epitome of the world's sorrow and need. Jesus first comes into touch with its pain. Then He confronts its unbelief. Then He is vexed by its impotence through prayerlessness. Then He is moved by its need. It is deeply significant that the form in which need should cry to Him would be that of a child under the thrall of an evil spirit. It is as significant that the crowning act of the miracle should be His lifting up of the child, and His restoring him to his father. If ever a child is lost, in the most poignant sense of the word, it is when he is lost, as this child was, to all that is wise and good and fair, to helpfulness and to purity, until love's quenchless hope is moved to bitter tears. Let us keep in mind this deed of Christ, that we may understand God's heart toward all lost children, and learn how we should regard such sorrows.

I. Let us think, to begin with, of *children lost in death*.

“There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But some dead lamb is there ;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has its vacant chair.”

Some of you remember as though it were yesterday, and you never will forget, the hour in which you lost your child. The mention of it takes you back to his dying bed. It came so suddenly and it seemed so needless. It emptied both your hands and your heart. In a moment all your hopes and dreams were mocked. Others had their children spared to them, and that made the sense of loss more keen. But as surely as Christ healed the sorrow of this father with his epileptic son, so lost to him, as surely has He healed yours. He has healed your sorrow by helping you to see its meaning, to enter into its grace, and to realise that your child shall yet be your very own. You now understand the grace of God in the trial. It was His call to become less earthly, less high-minded, less eager to stake all on the things of time. The loss left a mark which all who know you now see to have been made by the finger of God. You have been wiser, and gentler, and more quickly moved to kindness. You have become more sure of the unseen and the eternal. You have become more wistful for that land where little ones walk in white. As years go on, and your other children grow up to be no longer children, you realise that the one child you have not lost is the child whom God hath taken.

In *Margaret Ogilvy*, the biography of his mother, Mr. J. M. Barrie has a chapter which he entitles, "How my Mother got her soft Face." He describes the day when the news came that her eldest boy

had met with an accident. She set off between her child and death, but as she was going to the station the telegram came, "He is gone." She came back to her desolate home, and she submitted herself, in her strong faith, to the will of God. But she never recovered the blow. She was delicate from that hour. But she was singularly ennobled. Her biographer adds, "That is how my mother got her soft face, and her pathetic ways, and her large charity, and why other mothers ran to her when they had lost a child." We all grow simpler, meeker, more patient in mind. We all sit in wisdom's school, we all enter large rooms of knowledge when we lose our children in death. We all find ourselves endowed not only with charity, but with a strong and tender faith. For the loss of a child means that God has come so close to us that He has taken our little one out of our arms into His own.

II. Think, in the second place, of the *children lost to us in presence and fellowship*. The day comes, if God spares them to us, when our children pass out of our homes, plunge into the broad stream of humanity, begin to live their own lives, and take up their own attitude to its circumstances. For a long time they were dependent on us. They spoke with our accent, thought with our thoughts, and their travels were bounded by our wish and our will. But a learning we never had the opportunity of

acquiring was attained by them. A knowledge they will not, or cannot, share with us has been gained. New ideals of life, differing conceptions of duty, unfamiliar modes of pleasure, habits and customs alien to us, rule their decisions. New personalities, who look at us with indifferent or with critical eyes, come into their lives. Then the greater changes come. They leave the home. They seek their own well-being and advancement in other lands. Their letters show how the once narrow strait between us and them is widening. We awake to a chill sense that we have lost our children.

This loss is inevitable. Yet even when it shadows us it may move us to silent praise. When our children are lost to us in presence and fellowship that they may pass into a life of their own, which is a life of service to God, our sorrow is turned into joy. There is a classic instance of this which holds the whole mystery both of its bewilderment and its possible joy. As Joseph and Mary went northwards from the Passover feast to Nazareth, they found at the close of the first day's travel that they had lost their child Jesus. "But they, supposing Him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance: and when they found Him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking Him." Then came the words of tender reproach, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." The answer

of Jesus is the answer that every father and mother, touched to sadness as their children slip out of their grasp and pass out of their lives, craves to hear. "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" It was an answer which threw light upon the deep things which Mary had pondered in her heart. Yet Mary realised that she had lost her child. He would never be the same to her again. He would still be obedient, and gentle, and kind, but a new consciousness had come to Him, and a new relationship had been formed. He had crossed the threshold of a new world. Yet in a deep sense these children also, who seem so lost to us, are delivered to us again, and bound to us by a deeper affection by Christ, when they reason with us that they must be about their Father's business. God grant that when the hour comes that your children pass out of your home and out of your life, your sense of loneliness may be comforted by the knowledge that they have entered the service of God.

III. Think, in the third place, of the *children lost in sin*. We touch here that loss which is closest to the loss of this father who cried to Jesus, "Master, I beseech Thee, look upon my son." For this is the loss through the power of evil possessing, and deforming, and despoiling the soul. We cannot speak of the children who are lost in sin

without touching chords that resound with a note of sadness, and rouse shadowed memories if not remorseful accusations. There is a book of vivid adventure with the suggestive title of *The Call of the Wild*. It is the story of a dog who has been pressed into the unaccustomed and embittering toil of a sledge-drawer. He had been born in civilisation, bred in its gentle usances, and taught to answer the word of those who cared for him. Past decades of wise training and true affection had impressed obedience and gentleness on his ancestors, and he was the heir of a goodly heritage. As the sledge party were driven on to the frozen North, the hardships of the labour, the sternness of the treatment, the harsh word and the threatened lash soured the dog's spirit and despoiled him of his trust in man and his liking for human ways. One night he heard the cry of a wolf in the distant forest. It awoke the dormant wolf in him. He stole away into the depths of the woods to answer it with the howl of a dominating savagery. He was lost to the sledge party and their toil. He lapsed into the wolf, and became as wild and as blood-eager as any of them. So our children are lost to us in sin. We nurse them with soft caresses. We lead their feet into ways of purity and truth. We teach them to pray. We beseech God for them night by night with special petitions. Yet again and again as they grow up through the years of youth we see moods, and we observe

tempers that give us fear. When manhood and womanhood come to them there comes also the call of the wild. We all know it, for we have all heard it. We all know the upbeat in the will, the rush in the blood, the throbbing impulses of the flesh that answer that call. There is a struggle between a sense of duty and the power of habit and the appeal of that new and exciting note that calls us out of the lowly services of a chastened life. The battle is now won, and then almost lost. It is now drawn, and then lost again, until that night when the final step is taken which means the dominance of the wolf heart within. There is a hymn which is seldom sung. It seems to many too hackneyed in thought and too commonplace in expression. It seems to others too harrowing. Yet it never is sung without sounding the depths of the poignant sorrow of some broken heart—

“Where is my wandering boy to-night—
The boy of my tenderest care,
The boy that was once my joy and light,
The child of my love and prayer?”

Walk our city streets as the hour grows late and mark the poor creatures who shamble past you in the shadows. Glance at the women who have lost almost all sense of shame as they flaunt in the blaze of the lamps. Think of those poor wasters of humanity who seek the shelter of hedge and brick-kiln and barn. Think of those who are away in tramp steamers under strange names, and of

those who are out amid the rough gangs of men who ask each other no questions. Remember those others who are branded by crime, and those less openly foul who have fallen out of the ranks of the honest and true. The most moving page in the *War Cry* is that in which fathers and mothers write the names of their lost children and disclose the desolation of their hearts. The children we have lost in death are, in a mystic sense, always our children. The children we have lost in presence and fellowship remain the solace of our hearts. But the children who are lost in sin are lost indeed.

But let us lift up this thought of the lost children to a higher plane. These children lost in sin are lost not only to the father and mother who once bent over them in love, but they are lost to God. We too seldom think when our sympathy goes out to those who have a wilful child, whose life is a long mutiny against goodness, whose name is bound up with shame—we too seldom think of the loss to God. Every human soul is a possible child of God. When one, whose feet should have been found within the Father's house, whose hands should have been filled with the Father's business, whose heart should have made response to the Father's call, turns his back on righteousness and on truth, then the sorrow of a great loss falls on the heart of God. Jesus felt the pain of this tortured child as keenly as his agonised father. That is the

truth that Jesus set in its most poignant form in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The shepherd was stirred to deep feeling at the loss of his sheep. The woman was keenly moved at the loss of her coin. But it is for the very purpose of bringing out the pain and the desolation of God the Father that Jesus tells the parable of the Prodigal Son. The whole message of the Old Testament and the New is not merely that our sins are set in the light of God's countenance, and are the burden of His heart, but this, which is a keener pain, that our lostness to Him and to His love and service and fellowship is the blight upon His blessedness. If any man or woman has felt the sleepless anguish of the loss of their child in sin, they can enter into some measure of the sorrow of God their Father over His lost children.

IV. But let us pass on to think of *one more lost child*. Do we realise that, when Jesus went out from the Father's house to this far country of ours, He was in a true sense lost to God. We are too apt to fasten our eyes upon the manger-cradle and the little Child laid in it. We are eager to summon up all the idyllic beauty of the story of Bethlehem. We are intent on the thought of that Incarnation in which the Son of God became the Son of man, took our flesh, lived our life, carried our sorrows, and bore our sins. We never can think too long or too deeply of these heavenly mysteries. But the

Incarnation of Jesus Christ was more than the Son of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us. It was the act by which heaven was emptied, and its glory despoiled, and the Father's heart bereaved. Milton sings, in his hymn on the Nativity—

“Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears
(If ye have pow'r to touch our senses so),
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the base of heav'n's deep organ blow,
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to th' angelic symphony.”

But did “the base of heaven's deep organ” make perfect harmony with the song of the angels? If God loved His Son from before the foundation of the world, and if that Son left the glory He had with the Father, was not the Incarnation an event which shadowed the heart of God? Did not voices cry also, in the presence of God, “Why hast Thou thus dealt with us?” And was not the answer then the words of full consolation, “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?”

Here we reach the point at which these two truths of human sorrow over lost children and Divine sorrow over His lost Son coincide in the Gospel. Why had God a lost child? Why did God suffer His bereavement and the emptying of His heart and home? God suffered His loss that yours might be remedied. It was your lost child God's exiled Son came to find. It was your

wandering boy, your waif and stray, your prodigal son that God's Son came to seek and to save and to lead home to God. This is the Gospel in the redemption of Christ, that because God knows what it is to lose His children, to see them wander away into the far country, and to waste their substance in riotous living, and to sit down in want and shame, He bereaved Himself of His own Son that He might return, leading many sons unto glory.

The New Testament abounds in metaphors for that great change of relationship to God which is the beginning of salvation. All of these metaphors have power to express the experiences of the soul. All of them have brought light and help to repentant and seeking men. There are some for whom the hour of their great change will always be a passing "from darkness to light." They remember the day when all the folly, and wilfulness, and shame of an evil life stood out in the light of God. There are others for whom it is a turning "from the power of Satan to God." They remember that experience in which the power of evil habit, and wicked desire, and tyrant passion was relaxed, and they knew themselves to be under the mercy and grace of a personal God. There are others for whom salvation will always be figured under the image of passing "from death to life." That is no figure at all to them. They remember how dead they were—dead to goodness, and to the call of things pure, and to God's presence and to His grace. They recall the

day on which they came forth from death, and by a new birth saw a new world and entered into a new kingdom. They came forth to live with new hopes, new desires, and new joys. There are others for whom the great words "being aliens and enemies of God," but being now "reconciled unto Him," will express, for all time, and all eternity, the central thought of their experience. They were transformed from that inward rebellion against God's will and ways, and that deep distaste to everything holy, and that alienation to the very thought of God, into a mind which counted God Master and Friend and Lover. There are others whose experience can be set in simpler and yet as significant terms. To them God is the God of their covenant, who called them to make a new and everlasting bond, to serve Him here, and serve Him hereafter. But the most comprehensive and the most tender words to express that new relationship are "He was lost and is found." "Lost and found"—that is the best beloved word of Jesus. The woman by the well was lost and was found. Matthew at his publican's stall was lost and was found. Zacchæus by the highway was lost and was found. The penitent thief on his cross was lost and was found. Paul on the way to Damascus was lost and was found. Whatever may have been our individual experience, in whatever way God may have appealed to us, and by whatever word or thought or event He may have quickened us, this is the all-embracing truth, that we were all lost

children of God, lost in sin, and we have been found by God's Son, Jesus Christ.

We know well what it is to be lost. Every man, even the most hardened, has at times a sense of his loneliness, his want, his distance from God, his absence from the true home of his soul, his failure to fulfil the true purpose of his life. Every one of us comes to the hour when we are conscious that we are lost. I think it one of the truest remarks that a man can make that much of the engrossment of men's hearts with worldly things, and many of the pleasures which they so hotly seek and so poorly enjoy, and all the deep unrest that lies behind the fullest life, are only symptoms of the lostness of those who ought to be children of God. Our discontent with our lot, our bitterness and our pride, our worldly ambitions, and all the petty pleasures we seek, are but the attempts to satisfy the child's heart which can find rest only in the Father. A little child was lost in a city thoroughfare. He could give no account of his home. He could not tell his address. He knew nothing more than his own pet home name. He was taken to the police-station in the hope that his parents, who were doubtless seeking him with distracted hearts, would seek him there. Kindly hearts strove to comfort him. They bought him little dainties. They sought out some dis-used toys to interest the child and to engross his mind. Strong men, full of pity for the little one,

bent themselves to play with him. His tears ceased, but ever and again a recurring sob revealed that his lostness was still the pain of his heart. An hour after he was taken to the station the voice of his father was heard, asking, in eager and tender tones, for his lost child. The boy sprang to his feet and cast away the poor toys with which he had been comforting his sad heart, and ran out to be clasped in his father's arms. So every lost child of God, when he is found, will throw away those poor and trivial and unsatisfying joys with which he has tried to deceive himself that he does not need his Father's love and care and fellowship. He will hear in his heart, as God finds him, some echo of that word of Jesus, "This My son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

XXV

WITH STEADFAST FACE

“And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.”—LUKE ix. 51.

THE shortness of the step between the Transfiguration and the Cross has neither been clearly recognised nor sufficiently considered. It has been unnoticed, partly because the Gospel writers make few clear notes of time, and partly because the brief transcript of the events at Cæsarea Philippi is placed near to the centre of each Gospel. Few readers have realised that we have only brief and broken accounts of the first two years of Christ's ministry. It does not readily occur, even to a student's mind, that only the story of the last events of Christ's life has been told with a large fulness of detail.

It was in the autumn of the third year of His ministry that Jesus withdrew, with His disciples, to hold this religious retreat among the hills that cluster round the northern end of the Jordan valley. It was in the autumn, that lovely time of the year, known elsewhere as the Indian summer, that Jesus

sought this season of refreshment and renewal. In some six or seven months afterwards He entered Jerusalem as its king. It was in the spring, when the winter was past, and the rain was over and gone, and the flowers were appearing in Joseph's garden, that Jesus died. He came down from the mount of His Transfiguration, having seen His heavenly vision, with this one thing to do—to be obedient to it and to fulfil the will of God by dying on His cross. He would spend the winter in Capernaum. He would heal the bowed down in the synagogue, and open the eyes of the blind by the way. He would speak to men who sought Him out and asked Him to their tables. He would spend many hours in converse with His disciples, and, in clear counsel and by solemn parable, He would prepare them for their solemn charge. Then, when the Passover Feast was at hand, He would gird up His loins, give one last look to all that was dear to Him in Galilee, and pass up through Samaria to present Himself as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. That is the point of time that Luke marks when he writes, "And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

This is a picture of Jesus. It is the portrait of Jesus with the steadfast face. It is the portrait of our Lord with His secret hidden in His heart as the impulse of His life. He had already twice declared it to the disciples, but its message was too strange

for them. We, who know it, can see this secret of His cross revealed in every word He spoke and every deed He did. We see it most clearly in that unhastening, unresting, undeviating progress to Calvary. On the mount He had accepted the will of God. On the way to Jerusalem He is fulfilling it. Let us look at this picture of Christ to understand what the steadfast face in accepting the will of God meant for Him, and means for all, who will follow in His steps.

I. In the first place: In accepting the will of God *we find and fulfil the work given us to do.* It must not be thought that the will of God was always clear to Christ. He had also, like others, to comfort Himself with the assurance, "He knoweth the way that I take." He was found in fashion as a man, and in nothing more is that seen to be true than in this need of going forward with a steadfast face. We must never think that He saw the way to the cross, as one sees a road who looks upon it from a commanding height. With Him as with us, He found and fulfilled His work as He accepted the will of God with steadfast endeavour to do it.

There has often occurred to my mind a picture of the life of Christ, and the issue of it, had He wavered in doing the will of God. Had He come down from the mount of Transfiguration with its clear vision of Calvary, and refused to set His face steadfastly, what would have been the record of

Jesus of Nazareth? In some solitude among the hills of Galilee, or on some lovely spot beside its lake, or in some little mountain village, He might have founded a school of disciples, gathered about Him for meditation and for prayer. He might have built a house of mercy and a haunt of peace. He might have become the leader of one more of those countless communities which the East brings forth generation after generation. There would have been many a conversation and conference on the things of the religious life. There might have been other sermons on the mount, and a quiet and pathetic beauty would have graced every word and deed. There might have been the fulfilment of kindly ministries among the sick and the poor. But in a few years the founder of the school and all its members would have died. The community might have continued, revering the memory and keeping the counsels of its inspiring teacher. His name and His deeds would have been wrought into dim and lovely legends which some poet of the Western world would have set to alluring music. But God and man would have been left unreconciled and the world unredeemed. The Kingdom of God would have never come. Because Christ accepted the will of God and went forward steadfastly to His cross, He found and He fulfilled the work given Him to do.

No otherwise can we find and fulfil our work. The lives which are aimless and trivial and unworthy

are not the lives of the poor and the humble and the obscure. The lives which all men see to be valueless in themselves and to others are those which have no pure and self-denying purpose and no deeply-passioned steadfastness in them. The lives which miss the highest, which fail, indeed, to achieve anything, are those which have refused to steadily accept the will of God. There are many men who have been given the heavenly vision and have seen the way of the will of God clearly enough, but they have turned aside from its straitness and hardness, and have not done the work given them to do. A man may gratify a selfish ambition. He may gain wealth. He may win applause. He may seem to occupy a position of moral influence. But, as years go on, it will be seen that he has missed the highest and the best in life. He will become surely and sadly conscious in himself that he has not done the things he might have done. In some hour, when his conscience has been quickened and the haze lifts from his horizon, he will see how he has faltered and why he has not done that work for God and man that might have been set against his name. Had he only, scorning his own ease, disregarding his own loss, denying his own ambitions, been able to steadfastly accept the will of God, he would have found a singular fitness in the duty and service to which he was led. When David Livingstone offered himself for the foreign mission field, his heart was set on China. He had studied

its problems. He had been allured by the great names of the men who had already given up their lives to the evangelisation of the Chinese. He was burning with a true zeal to enter into that noble succession. But no opportunity was open to him. The door was shut somewhat abruptly in his face. There came the call to Africa, with its rude savages, unexplored rivers, far-stretching, treeless plains, and unknown privations. He hesitated. But he looked again at Christ, and he accepted this somewhat unwelcome will of God and steadfastly fulfilled it. To his own amazed and grateful surprise, he found and he fulfilled the work God gave him to do. Never shall any man meekly and humbly take up some duty, occupy some lowly sphere, accept some difficult lot in life, or go forward to his cross, but he shall find and fulfil the work of God.

II. In the second place: In accepting the will of God *we discipline our characters*. The discipline of the character is the inward and immediate reward of accepting God's will. It is an attainment towards which every true man looks. It is an achievement which every one of us in our highest moments desires. By prayer and by meditation, by resisting temptation, and by the doing of our daily toil, we achieve this discipline of our spiritual nature. But none of these work in upon us with the swift ease of some decisive acceptance of the will of God. In a single hour a man who has made this great choice

will pass into a nobility which will impress its stamp on every thought and word and deed. We are not too greatly daring when we say that Christ's acceptance of God's will in His cross disciplined His character. There is a simple and virgin beauty about the early months of Christ's ministry. There is a certain rush and splendour about its crowded second year when He was in the full tide of His popularity. But it is in the closing months, when the shadow of the Cross is upon Him, that His passion for God becomes more intense and His life rises to a sublime holiness. We do not marvel that for these apostolic men the face of Jesus, as He stepped steadfastly onwards to His cross, eclipsed the face of the teacher of Capernaum and the carpenter of Nazareth.

What are the elements of this discipline? Foremost among them there is that concentration of mind on a supreme purpose in life. There are many lives which fail to do anything because of this want of concentration. Nothing is more common than to read or to hear of some man whose powers make him a master of the conversation in every company, whose acquirements are spoken of with deep respect, and about whom hopeful men utter generous prophecies. Yet such men often fritter away their lives, and more often still become moral problems to those who love them. A shallow judgment proclaims it to be something lacking in their wills, or something too easy in their circumstances, or some want of fitness with the time. The true and deep cause of

the uselessness of these lives is the want of that concentration which is given only by some high purpose fastened upon the mind and heart. The highest purpose possible to a man is to accept the will of God. The simplest and the humblest, alike with the most nobly endowed and the most highly placed, pass into this concentration which gathers up all a man's powers into a single force only as Jesus gathered up His powers when He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.

Another element in this discipline is a certain elevation of thought and feeling. We all notice in men and women of piety that occasional distance from us, that aloofness from many of the interests and motives which are the stock in trade of other men, and that scrupulousness and conscientiousness which are the result of this elevation of thought and feeling. Jesus was a little further away from His disciples, and they felt Him to be living on a higher plane, as He went up to His cross. Mark tells us of one scene which lays this truth bare. "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them; and they were amazed; and as they followed, they were afraid." This going on before and alone, this absorption in thought, this air and bearing of One whose conversation was in heaven, so marked in Christ, is seen, in lesser measure, in all who follow Him. Keble, in his chaste and restrained lines on St. Matthew, has set this truth to its fitting music.

“There are in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of th’ everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusty lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holier strain repeat.”

Another element in this discipline is the purification of the life. Even a low aim, if pursued with steadfast face, purges not only a man’s thought and feeling of base alloy, but purifies his words and deeds. To build up a large business, to amass a competence, to attain some worldly ambition, or even to maintain some unimportant position in life has a notable power to keep a man’s feet out of unworthy ways. But to steadfastly accept the will of God sets and keeps every man on the great pilgrimage. Nothing base, nothing mean, nothing common is done by him. That wisdom which is pure and peaceable is given to him. That chastity which will not offend even in look clothes him like a garment. Sometimes a dark sorrow falls upon a life which seems to quench its joy. But if, in that hour of arrest, the will has accepted the will of God, the heats and passions are purified in a single night and the character is disciplined. Temptation will come. Hours of weakness will still be known. The glamour and glitter of this world will shine into the eyes. The assault will still be made by evil on the flesh and on the spirit. But that discipline which is purification will keep the man in his hour of trial.

Here is a youth passing down a dark street as the night is growing late. He is alone and a stranger in a great city. His thoughts have become vagrant. The city's sights and sounds have been alluring. The mysteries of its gaiety and of its forbidden scenes are tempting his curiosity. The time of his acceptance of the will of God seems to have sunk below the horizon behind him. A soft, low sound is heard within: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them; and they follow Me." With a swift reaction of feeling and a deep shame that flushes his face, he lifts his eyes once more to the will of God. He accepts it again in a new steadfastness and passes on purified and ennobled. No man will become disciplined in character unless he has set his face steadfastly to go to his Jerusalem.

III. In the third place: In accepting the will of God *we enter into that rest which is our deepest satisfaction*. It is a common thought that those who accept God's will pass into a shadowed life. To the outsider it seems to be a constant walking in a narrow and cheerless way. The truth is that there is no elation so deep, and no exultation so long sustained, as that of the man with the steadfast face. Many a man has passed into the way with the thought that he was opening a door into a narrow and high-walled lane. The door has opened, to his delight, into a garden of beauty and of peace. The acceptance of a heavy burden, the acquiescence

to "the crook in the lot," the choosing of the path that leads to a cross gives a liberty to the thought, a largeness to the view, an animation to the spirit, which is as far above the calm of a stoical temper as the sunshine of a June day is brighter than a grey December light.

This truth has been set in a work of imagination which its author entitles *The House of Quiet*.¹ With a charming clearness and a singular simplicity of style, the author describes the life of a man who had attained, after a youth of unstable health, to an apparently sound constitution, and was now living out a full and happy and useful life in London. Suddenly his old delicacy of health reappeared. He consulted an eminent physican. He came out of the consulting room with a virtual sentence of death. "To say farewell to the bustle and activity of life; to be laid aside on a shelf like a cracked vase, turning as far as possible my ornamental front to the world; to live the shadowed life, a creature of rules and hours—a degrading and humiliating rôle." But he accepted the will of God. He took up his cross. He passed into "The House of Quiet," expecting only the peace of a difficult resignation.

But in "The House of Quiet" a new life began. An unexpected feeling of the possibilities of life dawned. His perceptions became more delicate. The gush of morning air, the liquid song of birds,

¹ A. C. Benson, *The House of Quiet*, p. 87.

the sprouting of the green buds, the babble of the stream gave a new delight. His intellectual life grew strong, eager, discerning. A quickened taste for pure and noble reading, and a fresh joy in beauty, filled him with rapture. Then there swelled within him a more deliberate intention of enjoying simple things and of expecting beauty in homely life. At last he awoke to his true service. He had hitherto looked on at life around him with a dimmed eye and dulled ear. Now all the cries of the sick and the pained, and all the eager and appealing voices of the young and wistful, and all the soft, low sobbing of the bereaved fell upon his ears. All the needs, daily and clamant, of his neighbours rose up in appeal. This broken man, walking on the edge of death's abyss, gave up his life and used his feeble strength to help and to comfort others. He found that he had entered a new world. He no longer lived in the isolation of the strong, the successful, the selfish. New felicities swelled within his heart. New and un hoped-for strength was given. His life became a life of faith and love; and that rest, which is our deepest satisfaction, is always their first-born child.

This explains that peace of Christ which was in flood as He sat with His disciples at the supper-table. This explains that radiant calm with which He went forward to His cross. There is no sadness and no bitterness so unrelievable as that of the

man who casts off a burden God has laid upon his shoulders, who declines a duty to which conscience prompts, who refuses the cross that seems to make his life a sore travail. If men will enter into deep and satisfying rest, let them steadfastly set their face to go to Jerusalem.

I cannot close without speaking of the suggestion which clings to these words as they become familiar to our ears. Christ set His face toward that Jerusalem which should crucify Him, but surely He set His face also to the Jerusalem beyond. In an uplifting sense every believer should have his face set steadfastly toward the heavenly Jerusalem, and not count too anxiously the other cities he may pass through. Wordsworth tells us that as he was walking with his sister by the side of Loch Katrine, one fine evening after sunset, two women met them, one of whom said, by way of greeting, "What, are you stepping westward?" The words vibrated on a tender chord within the poet, and awoke him to his music. He writes:—

"And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of *heavenly* destiny.

.
The echo of the voice enwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of travelling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way."

As we set our faces steadfastly toward the Jerusalem of our sorrow or our trial, we shall find that we are also setting our faces to walk in that

endless way through the world which reaches the Jerusalem which is above. That is the only entirely satisfying joy the spirit can know. But we must remember the steadfastness! Not all who begin the way pass in through the gate.

XXVI

WE SHALL KNOW AS WE ARE KNOWN

"Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."—
HOS. vi. 3.

"Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am
known."—1 COR. xiii. 12.

THE unfaltering contrast between man and man, the division between sheep and goats, wheat and tares, grain and chaff, which runs through the whole Scripture, has been set impressively in a suggestive Old Testament phrase. It is the contrast between those who "know the Lord" and those who "know not the Lord." The men who know the Lord have not only made the venture of faith, they have passed on into the inner shrine of communion and love and dear and costly loyalties. God has become not merely the certainty of their waking thoughts but the treasure of their souls. In their awe and reverence, in their meek response to His call and their glad obedience to His will, He has shown them His covenant. This distinction has been set in its sharpest outlines on a single page. Samuel hears God's voice in the temple. He responds to the call.

He yields his life to God's service. The historian writes the word which explains his experience, "He knew the Lord." He writes in a single keen-edged word of condemnation, "The sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord."

This experience of knowing the Lord is not completed in a single hour nor attained by one decision. As Hosea proclaimed to the penitents of Israel, we must "follow on to know the Lord." Both in the story of the individual believer's experience and in the history of the progress of the Church there is an ever growing light, an ever enlarging knowledge, an ever more intimate communion. The individual believer can say of his knowledge, even in his short span of time—

"Thou broadenest out with every year,
Each breadth of life to meet."

On the larger scale of the history of the Kingdom of God the truth is written in bolder lines. The patriarchs and lawgivers of Israel were only torch-bearers in the darkness. The Old Testament prophets were pilgrims of the night waiting and watching for the coming of the dawn. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises." Then the morning came. Christ was born in Bethlehem. He walked in a glory too heavenly for men's eyes to see. He spoke with a depth of wisdom they had no ears to hear. The meaning of that life, whose simplest deed we now see to have

been divinely beautiful, was greatly hidden from them. His death was an act of such grace and such eternal moment that their poor thoughts fluttered before it. But as scholars in His school they passed on learning line upon line, precept upon precept. At last they saw His glory. They "knew the Lord" as Samuel had never dared to dream. "He that hath seen Me," said Jesus, "hath seen the Father." He had become their Master, their Friend, and their Lover for evermore.

But this experience of knowing the Lord Jesus was not completed even when His disciples had beheld His glory in its fulness of grace and truth. The New Testament does not close with the story of the supper-table and the garden and the cross. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His words, and John lay on His bosom with a speechless rapture; but both of them had to follow on to know the Lord. The purpose of the New Testament, as we have it, is to show to us how these men and women entered into the fuller light and the closer fellowship. As we ponder the closing sentences of the Gospels, and read the messages of the Epistles, we learn how men grew into the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is a controversy which reappears in every century. It ranges to-day around the question, "Jesus or Christ?" The scholar comes with his painstaking learning, his confident historical criticism, and his daring generalisations, and he

sets the Gospel records, when he has searched and dissected them, against the message of the Epistles. He tells unlessoned believers, to their surprise and dismay, that the Christ of the Epistles, and especially of the Epistles of Paul, is not the Jesus of the Gospels. He declares that the too eager and credulous imagination of the early believers has worked upon the simple moral beauty of the prophet of Nazareth, and created that figure and personality who was the adoration of the early Church and is their own delight. He bids them go back to the honest prose of the story of Capernaum and the tender romance of the idylls of Bethany, to find the real Jesus, wise, gentle, meek, and tender, but only with a human wisdom and a mortal tenderness.

There are two answers to the critical scholar's array of evidence and argument (without touching upon its sufficiency or fairness) which are clear and, I venture to say, decisive. The first is that the Christ of the Epistles is the Lord, not only of Stephen, and Barnabas, and Paul, not one of whom may ever have seen His face, but He is "the same Jesus" of Peter, and James, and John, and Mary, who had looked into His eyes and heard His voice. Does any one, who is not obsessed by some theory, believe that they forgot the manger-cradle, and the carpenter's shop, and the lodging in Capernaum, and the cross, and the tomb? At night, when the evening lamp was lit, they sat together and spoke of His compassion and His love while He was here

among men, and before they went to their rest they looked up in prayer to Him and to His throne in the heavens. To their children they told the stories of His grace—how He took up the little children in His arms, and watched them while they played in the market-place and praised them when they sang in the temple. To many a heathen convert, who had heard the whisper of Christ in his soul, they spoke of His looks and His tears. The simple reason why the Epistles contain so few references to the words and deeds of Jesus is that these were the dear and oft-repeated commonplaces of their household talk and their daily worship. When their hearts were breaking because of sorrow or of scorn they cited His words to each other. When their ways sloped down to shame they recalled His cross clear against the opened heavens. It was impossible for a Church which held such believers with memories so deeply dyed with the imperishable story of His life, to have a Christ foisted upon them who was not also Jesus of Nazareth.

The second answer to the critic lies in this, that there is a distinct difference between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Christ of the Epistles. It is a difference of which both Gospels and Epistles are fully aware. It is the difference between the knowledge of one who is known no longer after the flesh. It is explained by this clear and momentous truth that the disciples have followed on to know the Lord. The Holy Spirit has taken of the things of Christ, and

showed them to His people. They have a more instant and immediate avenue of knowledge. The Lord appeared to them. He stood by them in the night of their fear. His face shone out in the darkness of the way. He spoke to them in their hours of pain. They had known Jesus. They could not forget their knowledge of the Christ. Now they have followed on to know "the Lord." The consummation of that experience will be to know as they are known.

There are certain definite stages in this enlarging knowledge of the Lord which can be clearly marked. They are set down for us in the New Testament. Let us consider them, then, in their order.

I. The first stage is *the knowledge of the risen Lord*.

It is a great gift of God's grace to believe in Christ who lived and died. It is a transforming experience to know Christ Who not only died but rose again. There are some to whom one need not deny the name of Christian, who have not attained to this knowledge. The closing pages of the Gospels show us men walking in this dim and cheerless light. Their religion was only a tender memory. Its most sacred spot was a grave with a stone set upon it. Their hopes were only the wreck of vanished dreams. Their lives held a future of a hard and saddened toil. Suddenly there rings in the ears of this little band of dispirited men and women the cry, "The Lord is risen!" Mary met

Him in the garden. The eleven marked the wound-prints in His hands and in His feet, and heard the dear familiar word of peace from His lips. Two of them saw Him break the bread with His pierced hands, and give God thanks in the well-remembered way before He vanished out of their sight. John, looking through the morning haze, saw a stranger on the beach, and cried, "It is the Lord!" These believers rose up to a new plane of knowledge, whose sublime significances filled them with awe and roused them to rapture. The glory of the risen Lord and the solemn certainty of His haunting presence paled the words and deeds of Galilee and Samaria. The passion of their hearts has been recorded in the aspiration of their foremost teacher, "I count all things but loss . . . that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection."

The power of this knowledge of the risen Christ works like a spell. Art has no more moving pictures than those in which it paints the empty tomb and its watching angels; the garden with the Lord walking in His unearthly grace; the way to Emmaus with men's faces transfigured from within; and the seashore where the disciples saw again the glory of the Lord. Literature has divined, with its prophetic instinct, the tremendous significance of this enlarged knowledge of Christ. Even Goethe, tinged though he was by pagan ideals, makes the bells of Easter Sunday morning ring in new hope to the heart of Faust awaiting his doom. Goethe realised that the

Lord Who rose again victorious over sin and death could bring back the most desperate wrong-doer from the gates of hell. The wail that is heard through so much of Matthew Arnold's poetry becomes a sob of anguish as he sees what he has lost, when he no longer can believe in the risen Christ—

“No thoughts that to the world belong
Had stood against the wave
Of love, which set so deep and strong,
From Christ's then open grave.”

A nobler poet than Goethe and a larger mind than Arnold has set this truth in a still clearer light. In the poem he calls “Christmas Eve and Easter Day,” Browning declares that the risen Lord is the fundamental fact of his faith. A doubt which was almost despair had ceased upon him. The evidences of the faith no longer held him, and all the offices of its worship in every form provoked distaste. He traces his ascent from that experience of a night of storm on the moor when he saw

“the sight
Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
With a hem that I could recognise,”

up to that more splendid certainty when

“The whole face turned upon me full.”

Browning had become conscious of the risen Lord, and his words rise to a height of self-forgetting passion that even he seldom attains.

More convincing and more illuminating to me is the witness of humbler believers. I need not

recall the rapture of that modern Christian teacher who rose to his feet as the whole face turned upon him full, ashamed of his past dim vision, full of delight at his new vision, crying, "Christ is alive! Christ is alive! I must let the people know." To that experience thousands of men who have spent years in the study of the Gospels, and have been busy with the words of Christ, can set their seal. But I think of the simple men and women I have known who began by seeing only the gentle Jesus of the children's hymn, or dwelling upon the deeds of Him Who went about doing good, or rising no higher than to revere the mystic of the Mount of the Beatitudes. I know that in some hour of quiet brooding or on some day of overwhelming sorrow they realised that Christ was risen, and was near, tender, waiting for a word, watching for a look, swift to strengthen and to help. They had followed on to know the risen Lord.

II. The second stage is *the knowledge of the ascended Lord*.

We enter a rarer atmosphere here, and we touch a more difficult truth. We are lifting up our eyes to the cloud which received Him out of their sight, and seeing the throne above it. Seldom does any young believer, even although assured that Christ is risen, attain with confidence to a sense of the ascended Lord. There is no more sublime article of the faith than that which affirms, "The

only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, Who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was and continueth to be, God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person, for ever." Do we realise what that means? How often do we enter into the sure persuasion that a human heart sits upon the throne. The early believers grew slowly into that certainty and still more slowly into its power. As it became the sure possession of their hearts, they were almost intoxicated by the thought that Christ is Lord of all. We see Stephen, as he dies in the field of the outcast, lifting his eyes to behold Jesus on the right hand of God. We see Paul in his prison strengthening his soul with the assurance that Christ must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. We hear the writer to the Hebrews exult, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." As the record closes, that aspect of Christ which eclipses all others is the Lamb on the throne. All the great believers have seen this sight, and all the most splendid services have been done under its inspiration. Every martyr who has borne witness to his Lord, from the first trembling Syrian down to the last Chinese convert whose dust is mingled with Manchurian earth, has looked up to the Lord on the throne. Every great preacher has a constant vision of an exalted Christ. Bunyan drew his evangelist with the Book in his hand and his eyes uplifted to heaven. George Whitefield looked out

upon those crowds of men so sunken and so godless that the most hopeful hearts despaired of their regeneration. But he always looked away toward the throne before he began to speak, and his hope and courage were rekindled. This victorious optimism ebbs and flows as the certainty of the ascended Lord becomes dim or shines out in transforming power.

There are times when the one assurance the Church needs is to see Jesus on the right hand of God. There is so much amiss in the world, so much sorrow and pain, and the tears are not wiped away. The victory of righteousness is so costly, so broken, and so slow. The Church is so rent by schism and so weakened by sloth and apostasy. Yet even in our dullest hours the vision of our Lord on the throne sends a flood of buoyant energy through our veins. There is a poem by Walt Whitman which illustrates this power of an assurance of an ascended Lord. He is recalling the famous march of Sherman through Georgia to the sea. He remembers that, when a soldier in the ranks, he passed an old, half-blind negro woman sitting by the roadside. She had been taken in her youth from her native Africa, robbed of liberty and of love, and had grown old, decrepit, broken-hearted, in her long years of bondage. Never did she expect to see freedom given to her race. But as the soldiers passed on in their victorious march she realised in her own poor, wondering way that a new power was ruling

in the land, and that, however long and blood-stained the struggle might yet be, the end of it was liberty to the slave.

“ ‘Who are you, dusky woman, so ancient, hardly human,
With your woolly-white and turbaned head, and bare, bony feet?
Why, rising by the roadside here, do you the colours greet?’ ”

‘Me, master, years a hundred since, from my parents sundered,
A little child they caught me as the savage beast is caught,
Then hither me across the sea the cruel slaver brought.’

No further does she say, but, lingering all the day,
Her high-borne turbaned head she wags, and rolls her darkening
eye.

And courtesies to the regiments, the guidons moving by.”

So amidst the welter and the strife, the pain and the sorrow, the sin and the shame of the world, and amidst all that makes us sometimes lose heart and sometimes grow bitter, we remember the ascended Christ. We see His regiments as they pass, and we are assured that the day is coming when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess Him Lord.

III. The third stage is *the knowledge of the indwelling Lord*.

There is a sense in which the knowledge of the ascended Lord seems to remove Him far from us and to make Him a distant and almost absent personality. But we follow on to a knowledge which brings Him nearer than before. We no longer know Christ “after the flesh.” As Paul says, “The Lord is that Spirit.” Spirit can touch spirit, spirit can commune with spirit, spirit can dwell with spirit, spirit can interpenetrate spirit, with

the swiftness and instancy and power of thought and desire and passion. The writers of the Epistles, therefore, speak of Christ not only as risen, and ascended, but as formed within them, pulsing within their wills, becoming the energy of their lives, enshrined in their hearts, indwelling within the temple of their spirits.

A new emphasis has been laid to-day on what is called the immanence of God. The charge is made, with a certain superior air, that the ordinary Christian preacher has preached over much on the transcendence of God, and has proclaimed the doctrine of the Father which is in heaven, but has failed to balance it by the declaration that God is also immanent in the world. By the immanence of God is meant His spiritual presence throughout all matter, all thought, all life, and especially in the souls of men. I need not stay to set down the desecrating issues of such a doctrine. It is a reversion to a stage of thought about God which was pardonable before the days of Christ. I will not stay to show that it really robs God of a true and distinct and individual personality, that it makes God the author of evil, and that it denies to man both real freedom and true responsibility, and makes Him little more than the drop of water through which the wave-motion passes in its onward course to break in surf on the shore. There is a truth of which Wordsworth is the prophet when he writes that there is—

“A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
And rolls through all things.

But Wordsworth did not dream that his lines would be interpreted as the message of a higher Pantheism. Neither in Scripture nor in experience nor in reason is there any doctrine of the immanence of God in nature, or in thought, or in life, or, mark this, in man as man. The Scripture-teaching, confirmed both by reason and experience, is that God dwells within the believing heart, but within no other. The witness of Jesus is, “If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” The experience to which Christian men may attain in Paul’s words is, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” John sets the whole truth in a verse of jewel-like beauty. “If we love one another God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us because He hath given us of His Spirit.”

The crowning example of this doctrine of the immanence of God is the incarnation of Jesus Christ, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Not within the heart of Judas, but within the heart of Mary; not within the heart of Simon Magus, but within the heart of Peter; not within the heart of Herod, but within the heart of James, whom he slew with the

sword; not within the heart of Herod, but within the heart of Paul, God is immanent. In those hours when our evil passions die down, when base thoughts and low desires and mean revenges are cast out, when the longing for God and a sense of His love is a spring of desire in our hearts, when the beauty of holiness in Christ has risen upon us with the rapture of a new dawn, we know that Christ dwells within. While we worship, while we serve, while we suffer, or while we pray, we find that the Lord is within and we enter into the knowledge of the indwelling Christ. Myers has engrossed that experience in an impassioned verse when he makes St. Paul cry—

“Then thro’ the mid complaint of my confession,
Then thro’ the pang of passion of my prayer,
Leaps with a start the shock of his possession,
Thrills me and touches, and the Lord is there.”

This whole experience has been tenderly described in the life of Horace Bushnell, a thoughtful American preacher of a past generation. After a brilliant course at Yale, young Bushnell turned aside from a career of the highest promise to preach the Gospel to a little congregation of believing men. He turned aside because he had entered into “the secret of the Lord.” Some fifteen years later he followed on to know the Lord. He lost his only son, and in that hour of keenly felt trial his holden eyes were opened and he saw the risen Lord. In succeeding years he passed on, as

all men do who are sure that Christ is risen, to the conception of the ascended Christ. But five years later, as he expresses it, he "passed a boundary." Christ had been pressing in upon him with a gentle and insistent sense of His nearness. He came down one February morning, after a night of quiet wakefulness, with a new light on his face. When one asked him, "What have you seen?" this preacher of Christ for over twenty years replied, "The Gospel!" He sat down to pour the treasures of his new experience into a meditation on the words, "Until Christ be formed in you." He proclaimed as a revelation from the Spirit of God his new knowledge of Christ as the indwelling, formative, energising, and sanctifying life of the soul. A new serenity of spirit and a wondrously sweet sanctity marked his after years. He had known Him, whom we all may know in that unutterable and entrancing way, as the indwelling Lord.

The secret of the Lord is not consummated even when we know His indwelling. We do not yet know as we are known. Yet no higher knowledge shall be given to us here. "Now we know in part," writes Paul, "but then shall we know even as we are known." That theme of Paul's becomes the anthem of the whole choir of New Testament writers. Mark how they interpret and enrich it. "Ye are come to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." "That the trial

of your faith, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and glory and honour at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "We shall see Him as He is, and we shall be like Him." "His servants shall serve Him : and they shall see His face ; and His name shall be in their foreheads." Then and not till then shall the secret of the Lord be consummated. Then shall we know Him face to face.

"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

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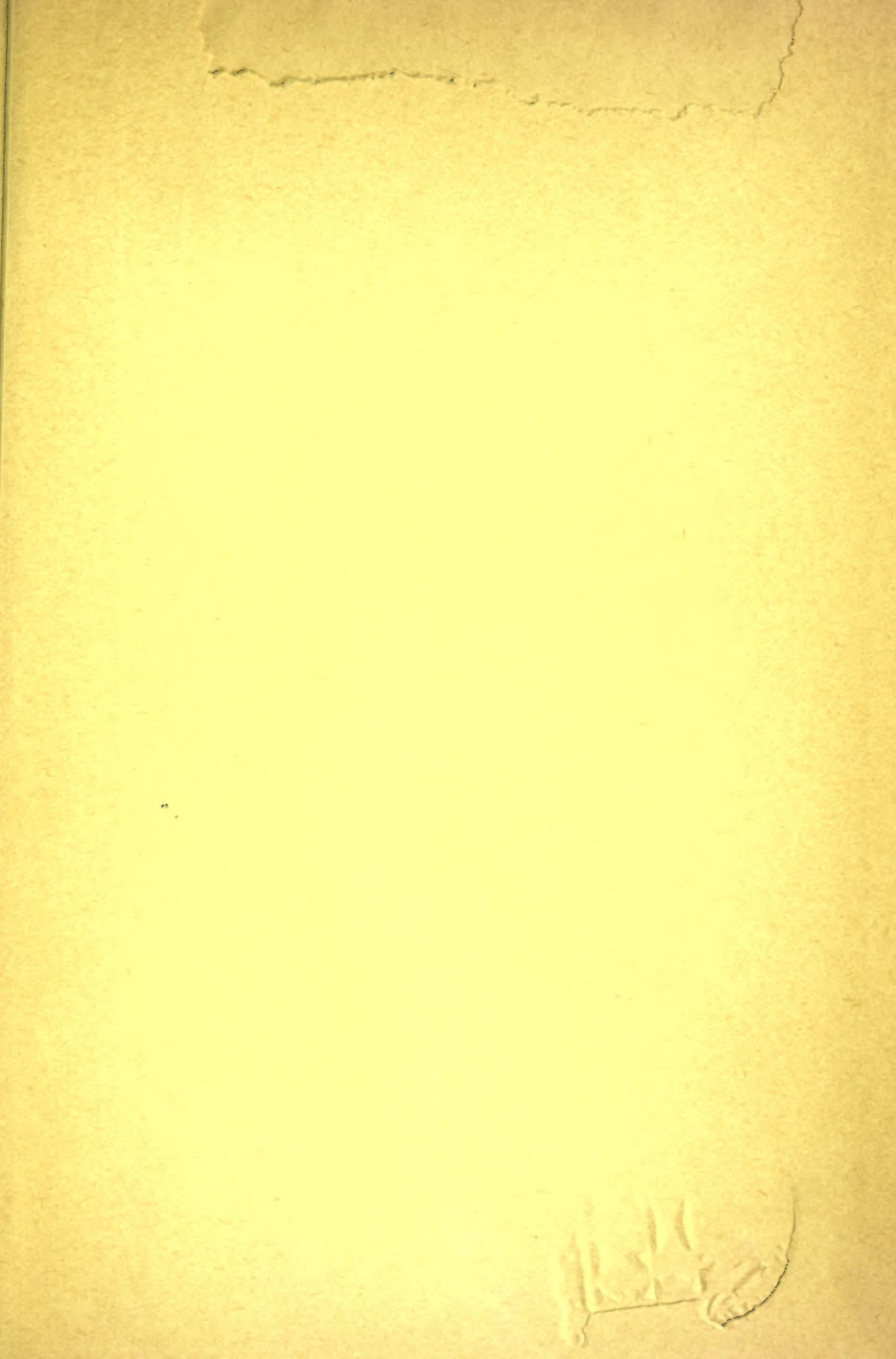
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